

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503.

1. AGENCY USE ONLY <i>(Leave blank)</i>	2. REPORT DATE 5 JUNE 1998	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED MASTERS' THESIS 5 AUG 97 - 5 JUN 98	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE WHITHER A COMMON SECURITY FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA?		5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) CHAN, CHUN SING, Singapore Armed Forces			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command & General Staff College 1 Reynolds Avenue, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES			
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.		12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A	
13. ABSTRACT <i>(Maximum 200 words)</i> This thesis investigates the concept of common security in Southeast Asia. It examines the likelihood of the Southeast Asia countries developing some form of common security architecture within the time frame of the next ten to fifteen years. The concept of comprehensive security, encompassing elements of economic, political, internal (social) and military security, was used to identify the security interests of the Southeast Asia countries. The NATO common security model was then used as a baseline model for comparison to identify the necessary and sufficient conditions for a common security model for Southeast Asia. Through the process, the characteristics and likely form of a Southeast Asia common security model were identified. The conclusion highlights that further cooperation or integration in the military security dimension will have to be founded upon the economic security and internal political stability dimensions, which will form the cornerstones to the overall efforts in developing a comprehensive common security in Southeast Asia.			
14. SUBJECT TERMS Concepts of security, Southeast Asia.		15. NUMBER OF PAGES 129	
		16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UNLIMITED

WHITHER A COMMON SECURITY FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA?

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U. S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

CHAN CHUN SING, MAJ, INF
SINGAPORE ARMED FORCES
M.A. (Hons), University of Cambridge (UK), 1994

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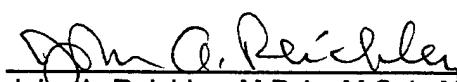
MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

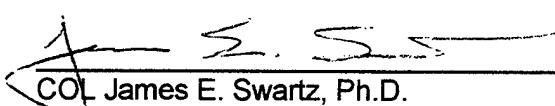
Name of Candidate: MAJ Chan Chun Sing

Thesis Title: Whither a Common Security for Southeast Asia?

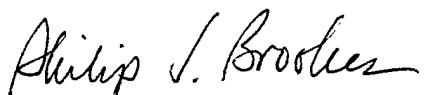
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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

WHITHER A COMMON SECURITY FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA? by MAJ Chan Chun
Sing, Singapore Armed Forces, 129 pages.

This thesis investigates the concept of common security in Southeast Asia. It examines the likelihood of the Southeast Asia countries developing some form of common security architecture within the time frame of the next ten to fifteen years. The concept of comprehensive security, encompassing elements of economic, political, internal (social) and military security, was used to identify the security interests of the Southeast Asia countries. The NATO common security model was then used as a baseline model for comparison to identify the necessary and sufficient conditions for a common security model for Southeast Asia. Through the process, the characteristics and likely form of a Southeast Asia common security model were identified. The conclusion highlights that further cooperation or integration in the military security dimension will have to be founded upon the economic security and internal political stability dimensions, which will form the cornerstones to the overall efforts in developing a comprehensive common security in Southeast Asia.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis could not have been possible without the Lord's grace, mercies, and guidance. It would also not have been possible without the guidance from the members of my thesis committee comprising Mr. John Reichley, Mr. Geoff Babb and COL Swartz. I am also grateful to the Combined Arms Research Library staff who have all been most helpful in their assistance to source for the many materials used in this thesis, and the staff of the Graduate Degree Programs Office. Last but not least, my appreciation goes to my wife Cher Hui for her patience, understanding, and encouragement throughout the course of the year.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE PAGE.....	i
THESIS APPROVAL PAGE.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER TWO : LITERATURE REVIEW	16
CHAPTER THREE: SECURITY AND THE SOUTHEAST ASIA COUNTRIES	30
CHAPTER FOUR: A NATO-STYLE COMMON SECURITY MODEL FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA?	45
CHAPTER FIVE: THE WAY AHEAD	101
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS.....	112
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	117
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST.....	129

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Southeast Asian countries led by Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand have experienced record economic growth in the last two decades; notwithstanding the expected slight slowdown brought about by the 1997/98 Asian currency crisis. Today, joined by the newly emerging “Tiger economies” of Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines, the region holds the promise of achieving even stronger economic growth with corresponding social and political development. As the region undergoes rapid development, it seemingly lacks any coherent security arrangement to insure future stability that underpins such achievements. The rapid pace of development will accentuate many security challenges, which in the absence of a comprehensive security framework, may end up threatening the continued growth and stability of the region. Hence, it was not uncommon for commentators to simultaneously tout the region’s growth potential while expressing concerns over its security future. This is especially so in view of the number of potential flash points in the region. While the regional economies continued their economic flight path, the urgent question becomes whether such development can be underpinned by the necessary security development.

It is therefore appropriate to analyze the security situation in Southeast Asia and ask if some form of security framework will evolve for Southeast Asia. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the form and structure of a security structure that could emerge in Southeast Asia in the next ten to twenty years. It will examine the concept of security as seen by the various Southeast Asian countries against known models of security cooperation. It will also identify the ingredients necessary in the Southeast Asian

countries' attempt to construct a unique model of security that will suit their own purposes and based on their unique circumstances.

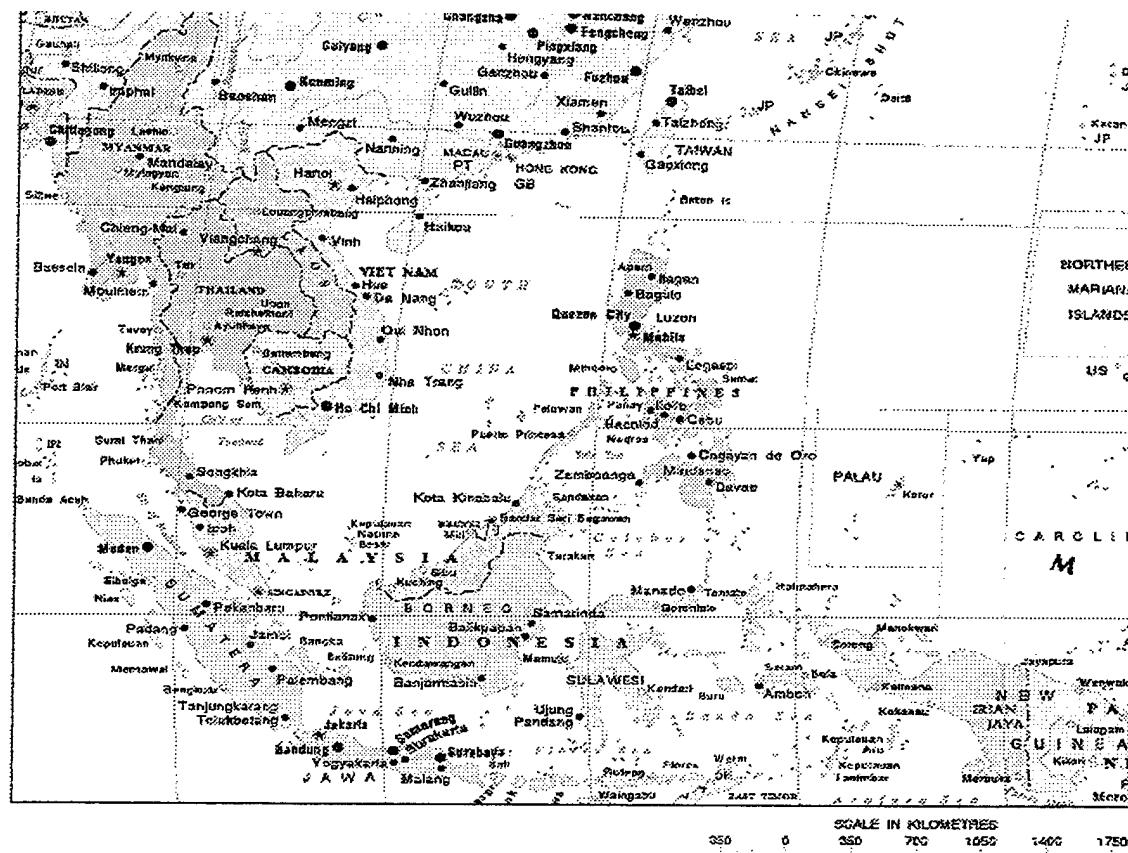


Figure 1. Map of Southeast Asia. Source: US CIA Mapping Service 802408 (R00732) 8-95

Geography of Southeast Asia

While there are no distinct boundaries of what is commonly known as Southeast Asia, it is usually taken to encompass the area from Indochina to the north, the Philippines archipelago to the east, the Indonesia archipelago to the south, and Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) with Sumatra to the west.

The region is characterized by its archipelagic nature and consists of more sea area than land. Only Thailand, Myanmar, and the Indochinese countries can be

considered part of the Asian continent proper. Indonesia and the Philippines, made up of more than 14,000 and 7,000 islands respectively, are characterized by their unique archipelagic nature. Malaysia and Singapore are more of a geographical appendage to the Asian continent. As will be seen, such diverse geography has and will continue to impact on the region's strategic and security picture.

Numerous vital sea lines of communication straddle the region, allowing the various Southeast Asian countries to directly and indirectly influence any passage through them between the Pacific Ocean, North Asia, and Indian Ocean regions. A quarter of world trade passes through these vital sea-lanes and the percentage is expected to grow as the East Asia region continues to develop. The most important of these sea-lanes is the Malacca Straits, which is the shortest route between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The alternatives to the Malacca Straits include the Sunda Straits between Sumatra and Java, and the Lombok Straits east of Java. Both of these and a number of other connecting straits to the Pacific Ocean are also technically within Indonesian territorial waters.

Geostrategic Importance of the Southeast Asia Region

Historical Significance

The significance of the Southeast Asia region grew tremendously from the late nineteenth century when East-West trade accelerated via the sea routes. In the old days, the region straddled the major trade route between the Far East and Europe through the Indian Ocean. Whoever controlled the region also controlled East-West trade. This led to numerous European colonial expeditions to the region, to stake a claim on one of the coveted ports and a piece of the resource-rich hinterland. The British controlled the Straits Settlement (which included Singapore, Penang, Malacca,

and the greater part of Peninsular Malaya); the Dutch took present day Indonesia, and the Spaniards controlled the Philippines.

Besides control of the trade routes, the region was also the source of many spices and other raw materials that the Europeans desired. This accelerated the overall development of the region and the colonies as ports and collection stations for the regional products. Singapore, Malacca and Penang, developed by the British East India Company in the early nineteenth century, were the leading examples of such developments.

Present Day Significance

This pattern of trade has not altered much to the present day. Southeast Asia, by its unique geographical layout, continues to control all sea routes between the Pacific and Indian Oceans. To bypass the region would require a traveler to go around the south of the Indonesian archipelago to the north of Australia. The growth of the energy trade has further increased the significance of the region. Middle Eastern oil has to pass through the region to reach Japan, Northeast Asia, and the United States, if it does not go via the Atlantic route. For example, more than seventy-five percent of Japan's energy imports passes through the Southeast Asia sea-lanes.

As the Southeast Asia countries' economic development gathers pace, the region's significance grew to become an important center for trade and investment. While the growth of the matured European and American economies slows down, the region continues to capture the limelight by its strong economic growth, notwithstanding the recent financial crisis. For example, the rapid attention given by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to the region crisis, vis-à-vis some other parts of the world, testified to the importance of the region's growth to the rest of the world. Following the examples

of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, the Southeast Asia countries are touted as the next wave of newly industrializing economies. This further promotes interest in the continued stability of the region by external parties concerned.

The rumored discovery of potentially huge oil and gas deposits in the South China Sea attracted further interest in the region, in an era where energy consumption is increasing while known stocks are decreasing. This is especially so for China, Vietnam and other developing countries where the demand for energy resources are far outstripping their indigenous capacity to meet them. As shall be seen, this will have a profound impact on the security of the region.

The emergence of China as a world power has further raised concerns among many countries about the security of the region. While China offers the potential of a huge market for the capitalist world, its uncertain political and military, and uneven social developments is creating an even bigger challenge to geo-strategists. As Southeast Asia lies just south of this awakening giant, many military strategists have expressed a renewed interest in the region's potential as a counterbalance to the "China threat."

Recent Developments

The Southeast Asian countries have not formed any security or military groupings among themselves without the participation of external powers since the failed attempts in the 1960s. Previous security alliances in the form of the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (or SEATO),¹ MALPHILINDO (a security alliance that derived its

¹ SEATO failed because non-member countries saw it as part of the wider U.S.-led containment strategy that did not really take into account the regional countries' security interests. The membership of the alliance was so diluted that there were actually more non-Southeast Asian countries in the alliance.

name from the three countries of **MALaysia, the **PHIippines and **INDOnesia******),² and Association of Southeast Asia (ASA)³ have all failed for different reasons. The domestic and inter-countries situations have also not given much hope to any such arrangements. While the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been more successful as an economic and social grouping, it has consistently avoided any talk of it being a security grouping or military alliance since its inception in 1967.⁴

While there has not been any region-wide security grouping, there are many existing bilateral and multilateral military security groupings that involve extra-regional countries. For example, the Five Powers Defence Arrangement (FPDA) involving the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore continues to bring the countries together for regular military exercises and has served as a major confidence building mechanism in the region.⁵ Likewise Thailand and the U.S. have their own bilateral security assistance arrangements.⁶ But common to all these arrangements is that they are not “common defense arrangements” which commits member states to

² MALPHINDO failed because Thailand, a key Southeast Asian country, was excluded and this inevitably bred suspicions that the alliance was targeted towards Thailand. MALPHINDO eventually failed because of *Confrontation* between Indonesia and Malaysia and the conflicting claims of Sabah by the Philippines and Malaysia.

³ Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines formed ASA in 1961. It failed because the exclusion of Indonesia meant that regional security challenges could not be fully addressed without one of the main (if not the main) member of Southeast Asia.

⁴ While ASEAN’s security role has never been publicly acknowledged by its members, the fact that member countries have to accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation which promote the concept of conflict resolution through the non-use of force, is arguably a security mechanism in a simple form.

⁵ The FPDA was formed after the British withdrawal from Malaya to ensure the security of Malaysia and Singapore in the early years of independence. Part of the reason was the fear of instability in Malaysia and Singapore brought about by Indonesian President Sukarno’s *Confrontation Policy*.

⁶ A main reason for the security assistance arrangement given to Thailand was because it was one of the “frontline states” during the Cold War era to contain the spread of communism in Southeast Asia.

come together to counter any military attack on other member states. A problem with these arrangements is that they can be easily misconstrued as targeting non-member countries. For example, Indonesia does not view favorably at the FPDA, nor does Malaysia feels comfortable with Thailand's closeness to the U.S.

Nevertheless, the need for some form of formal or informal security arrangement became unavoidable by the 1990s as the ASEAN countries continues to mature economically and become more interdependent. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)⁷ was formalized in 1994. Ostensibly, the ARF was promoted as a regional forum where ASEAN countries and external parties could participate to share views and concerns on security matters. Many commentators have seen this as a nascent security mechanism in the making while others have viewed its potential with guarded optimism. The main areas of concern is whether the current arrangement can maintain its utility to participating members if there is no formal mechanism for coordinated actions beyond consultation, although arguably consultation itself is a confidence builder and a necessary precursor for any collective action.

By July 1997, ASEAN had grown to encompass nine of the ten Southeast Asian countries. Cambodia was invited to join but was left out at the last minutes because of its domestic turbulence.⁸ It is widely expected to join the group in the near future when its domestic situation stabilizes. Given that ASEAN has managed to achieve the unprecedeted task of bringing together almost all the Southeast Asia countries, many

⁷ The ARF is actually a series of bilateral and multilateral forums where groups of countries meet to discuss security issues of mutual interests. There is no one centralized forum akin to more formal multilateral security arrangements.

⁸ This was the "coup" by Cambodian Second Prime Minister Hun Sen, which "disposed" First Prime Minister Prince Ranaridh and renewed the civil war in Cambodia. The subsequent rebuff of ASEAN's mediation efforts by Hun Sen highlighted the lack of any significant diplomatic power within ASEAN itself.

observers keenly await its next move of either fulfilling the promise for greater regional integration, or struggling to retain its purpose and coherence as a regional group.

It is with these developments in mind that this thesis examines the security outlook of Southeast Asia to see if there are grounds to expect a regional security framework to develop to complement and protect the region's economic success.

Importance of a Common Security Framework for Southeast Asia

The importance of developing a common security framework for Southeast Asia can be grouped into two sets of considerations: those internal to the Southeast Asian countries and those that relate to the external major powers of the United States, China, Japan, and to a lesser extent Russia and India.

A common security framework for Southeast Asia is important to the member countries for the following reasons:

1. A common security framework will serve to protect and sustain the rapid development of the Southeast Asian economies. A stable environment is especially important for many Southeast Asian countries whose rapidly developing economies are heavily reliant on foreign direct investments. Any instability in the region or in any particular country has the potential to spread quickly and adversely impact on the rest of the region. The Asian currency crisis of 1997 highlighted the urgency of such a need as the economies of the Southeast Asian countries slowdown with potentially disruptive repercussions on the region's security. For example, an attempt by the Malaysian authority to protect the job opportunities by repatriating foreign workers immediately set off a chain reaction with an adverse impact on Indonesia, who has up to 100 000 workers in Malaysia. Awareness of the futility of beggar-thy-neighbor policies has created a more acute sense for collective actions in Southeast Asia. This was also the

impetus among the ASEAN countries to resolve the Cambodian conflict quickly, to prevent a repeat of the 1980s refugee problem for the whole Southeast Asia.

2. A common security framework will be important for the Southeast Asian countries to resolve their many bilateral and multilateral disputes. Most significant among these are territorial and maritime boundary disputes left by historical legacy and accentuated by the recently instituted 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS). Besides territorial and maritime disputes, various Southeast Asian countries also have racial, religious, social, and economic tensions that need to be either resolved or contained. While economic and social development may ameliorate such disputes in the short term, there is also the danger of these disputes being aggravated by economic and political competition in the long term.

3. Since the various Southeast Asian countries gained independence after World War II, many ruling governments have been struggling with the issues of domestic stability and legitimacy. A common security framework, if established, would enhance the ability of the various governments to focus their energy on domestic (especially economic) development, rather than having to worry about the regional security picture. On the other hand, failure to develop a satisfactory regional security arrangement may heighten individual state's domestic security concerns as individual countries strive to attain self-sufficiency in defense and result in a Prisoner's Dilemma Problem⁹ in the security situation.

⁹ As in game theory, two parties will share a mutually beneficial outcome if they cooperate. But due to the structure of the payoffs for the game and failure to coordinate their actions, each party would be individually worse off if one chooses to cooperate while the other doesn't. As such, the individually rational decision to try to maximize one's individual payoff makes both choose the non-cooperation strategy which result in both parties worse off than if they had both cooperated. It is sometimes also known as the Tragedy of the Commons.

Besides the importance to the Southeast Asian countries, a common security framework will also be of concern to the major powers namely the United States, China, Japan, Russia, and India. In fact, Southeast Asia probably represents the only region in the world where all the major powers have such a direct interest. The following summarizes the key interests of the major powers in a common security framework for Southeast Asia:

The United States' interests in the stability of Southeast Asia covers a broad spectrum ranging from military to economic and political. From an economic standpoint, Southeast Asia represents a growing market for U.S. investments and products. The United States also needs freedom of passage through the region for its goods and military forces. Under the U.S. strategic plan of forward deployment, the Southeast Asian region holds the key to the corridor that allows the U.S. to transfer its forces between its two main theaters of concern of the Middle East and Northeast Asia. A common security framework for Southeast Asia could also potentially reduce the burden on the United States military. The stability and rapid growth of Southeast Asia could also be argued as a good example of the free market democracies which the United States advocates for the rest of the world.

For China, Southeast Asia is literally its backyard in more ways than one. As China attempts to catch up economically with the rest of the world, it desires a stable regional environment that does not upset its economic development plan. In addition, a stable Southeast Asia will also mean one less problem for a China that has still to deal with its many internal problems, ranging from separatist movements in Tibet and Xinjiang, the Taiwan issue, post-reunification with Hong Kong and in 1999 reunification with Macau as well. The power equation of present China would also suggest that a stable Southeast Asia would allow it to better focus on the potentially more explosive

northeastern Asia which has problems with the potential Korean reunification and maritime boundary disputes with Japan. On the other hand, any security structure for Southeast Asia will inevitably impact on China's interests in the South China Sea, especially its claims that the Spratly and Paracel islands, and its claims to the South China Sea as its "inner regional waters."¹⁰ On the political front, a security structure will change China's method of dealing with the Southeast Asian countries from its preferred bilateral basis to a more multilateral basis.¹¹

Japan's interests in Southeast Asia originate mainly from the economic sphere. If Tokyo's economic interests are threatened by instability in Southeast Asia, it is unclear if it will not undertake any unilateral military actions to secure them. A stable Southeast Asia will also mean a growing market for Japanese investments and goods. Just as important is that about seventy-five percent of Japan's energy consumption needs have to pass through Southeast Asia. Any instability in the region would threaten Japan's economy by severing its access to energy resources. This will then have adverse repercussions on the rest of the world's economy. Given the difficulties that Japan has encountered in trying to play a greater military and political role in Southeast Asia due to its World War II record, Japan must surely hope that Southeast Asia is able to resolve its problems internally.

Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Soviet (Russian) withdrawal from Vietnam, Russia still possesses a formidable military presence in the eastern Pacific. While its pacific naval fleet may be aging and falling into disrepair, it still has

¹⁰ Declaration made by PRC's 14th Party Congress in 1992.

¹¹ For example, in July 1995, when faced with a united ASEAN, which by then included Vietnam, China agreed for the first time to multilateral discussions on the South China Sea disputes and that the 1982 United Nations Laws of the SEA (UNCLOS) would be the basis for these discussions. (For example of this discussion, see Sheldon Simon, "Alternative Visions of Security in the Asia Pacific" *Pacific Affairs*, Fall 1996: 381-395.

substantial military resources to influence the outcome of any conflict in the region.

While Russia has thus far focused its efforts to attract investments from Western European countries, it will in some point of time in the future need to consider the potential of Asia as well, and Southeast Asia represents such a growing market for Russia.

While many commentators fail to discuss India's security interests in Southeast Asia, it actually controls the western exit of the vital sea-lanes from Southeast Asia and can directly impact on the stability of Southeast Asia. India's recent building of a naval base at the western exit of the Malacca Straits on the Nicobar Islands reinforces such a perception. Some analysts see India as having learned the lessons of its interventionist policies in the Sri Lanka debacle, and is therefore unlikely to play an active role in Southeast Asia. On the other hand, a more detailed analysis of Indian threat perception would reveal that its historical distrust of China might end up being fought through proxies in Southeast Asia. India sees recent attempts by China to build a naval base in Myanmar (Burma) which would allow China a land route to the Indian Ocean as a policy of containment and encirclement of India. New Delhi has tried to counter this through increased interactions with Mongolia, Vietnam and by applying pressure and incentive for Myanmar (Burma) to distance itself from China.

From the above, it can be seen that besides the Southeast Asian countries, other external parties have a great interest in the stability and security arrangements in Southeast Asia. For this very reason, any model of Southeast Asian security must also consider the impact of the external powers and the implications on them. At the same time, there is also the interest if the Southeast Asian security model can be replicated to the larger East Asian context. However, there is also the opposite issue if the ASEAN security model can retain its relevance in a larger East Asian security context. Marc

Gilbert (1996)¹² opined that “only the extension of ASEAN’s approach to regional security to the whole of Asia offers much hope to its member nations that they may play a significant role in any ASEAN security regime.”

Primary and Secondary Questions

The primary question that this thesis asked is whether there exists scope and potential for the development of a common security Southeast Asia in the next ten to twenty years. If so, what form would it take and what would be the realistic end states as constrained by the diversity in the various countries’ desired end states.

To answer this question, the understanding of “common security” is examined in the context of Southeast Asian countries. The respective countries’ security concerns and desired end states were examined against known security cooperation models. The thesis identifies the ingredients necessary for any security arrangements that Southeast Asia might adopt.

Assumptions

The main assumption in this thesis is that there will not be a sharp discontinuity in the political development of the region for the next five years. These possible sharp discontinuities include:

1. The break-up of Indonesia after the passing of the Suharto era.¹³

¹² Marc Gilbert, “Tigers in the Shatterbelt: ASEAN Security Architecture to the Year 2000 and Beyond” in Dianne Smith’s edited *Asian Security to the Year 2000 and Beyond*, Center for Strategic & International Studies, US Army War College, 1996.

¹³ The return of President Suharto for an unprecedented seventh term by the Indonesian Elections in March 1998 has merely postponed the inevitable and increased the risks of the eventual transition.

2. Unilateral action by China to assert its rights in the South China Sea through military action in the next five years; and
3. A collapse of the world economy that would drastically check the growth of the newly emerging Southeast Asian economies and result in massive social unrest in the countries concerned.¹⁴

Limitations

There are two main limitations in this study. The first is the assumption of a rational decision-making model by the respective Southeast Asian governments. The second is that it would be difficult to ascertain the actual intentions of the various governments as these can only be derived indirectly from their realized actions which are often also the result of various other complicating factors or “noise” in technical terminology.

While it is assumed that all the governments of Southeast Asia countries would follow a rational decision model based on their long-term strategic interests, it must be acknowledged that some governments may be subjected to greater short-term political pressure than others. This could then impact on the development of regional politics as short-term interests may over-ride longer-term interests repeatedly over a long period. The Keynesian dictum that “we are all dead in the long term” would seem to sound like dark humor. History has often produced government actions to secure short-term interests rather than long-term interests. In fact, many commentators would argue that the former would be the norm while the latter tends to prove the exception. As the Southeast Asian countries’ political systems become more open and transparent, there

¹⁴ The 1997 / 98 Asian Currency Crisis indeed has the potential to result in such a fallout if the economies of Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia falter.

is also the tendency that the policy-makers have to be more responsive to the public's demands which has often proved to be more short-term oriented.

The second limitation of the study is that as there is no opportunity to derive the intentions of the various governments at source. Their actual intentions could at best be derived indirectly from their public actions, speeches, and publications. In Southeast Asia, this limitation is especially serious because the cultural norms are such that a public figure may not always reveal his or her true beliefs. There is always the "shadow play" of statements being couched in ambiguous terms that can often lead to conflicting interpretations. Official functions and ceremonies are often more form than substance. Many actual decisions and intentions are deliberated behind the scenes, away from the public's eyes.

The first limitation on the possibility of the short-term priorities dominating over the long-term priorities will be examined in the thesis where applicable to point out the differences in outcome that can be expected. The thesis will possibly try to overcome the second limitation by comparing the past actions with the pattern of official sources and statements to try to postulate the real intentions where possible.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The older works on Southeast Asian security in general expressed guardedness, if not downright pessimism, toward Southeast Asia ever achieving any semblance of a “security community.” While most authors do not explicitly elaborate on their concept of “security,” the implied meaning tended to be more defense oriented. While different authors approached the subject from a variety of angles, their general guardedness or pessimism toward Southeast Asia achieving any coherence as a “security community” could be classified under the following categories:

1. External powers’ interference in the region
2. Intra-Southeast Asian difficulties
3. Domestic challenges within respective Southeast Asian countries

Another group of authors used the alternative approach of comparing the conditions of Southeast Asia with other security communities past and present, in order to examine the viability of Southeast Asia developing some form of security regime. Such comparison had tended to use European models, which included the “balance of power model” and the “Concert of Europe model.”

While different authors come to slightly different conclusions on the feasibility and form of a “Southeast Asian security community,” much of the previous analysis had been restricted to the period of pre-1995. Since 1995, there has been renewed interest in the subject with the formation of the ASEAN Regional Forum. More recent literature has begun to more fully take into account these recent developments. For example, the concept of Southeast Asia used by political scientists in the 1980s was divided between ASEAN-6 (Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, and the Philippines) and

the Indo-Chinese bloc of countries (i.e., Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam).¹ But the recent joining of Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar (formerly Burma) with the previous ASEAN-6 has fundamentally changed the concept of a Southeast Asian community at large. To speak of Southeast Asia now would almost be synonymous of speaking of ASEAN-10 (plus Cambodia, which is expected to join the group in a matter of time). On the whole, more recent writings on Southeast Asia tended to be slightly more optimistic about the possibility of a “security grouping” emerging in Southeast Asia. The following section reviews the works published according to the themes highlighted above.

Challenges External to Southeast Asia

Earlier authors who wrote on Southeast Asian security tended to see the interference of external powers (such as the U.S., China and Soviet Union) as an obstacle to a common Southeast Asian identity and concept of community. These included Wilfred Hermann (1995), Robert Scalapino (1993) and Michael Leifer (1980).² Michael Leifer (1980) noted that “throughout the post-colonial Southeast Asia, there has never been a time when the internal exercise of political power has been universally regarded as acceptable or legitimate or when states with competing interests have not been attempting in some ways to shape a regional balance (italics added) deemed to have global significance.”

¹ This was partly the result of the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in the late 1970s, which polarized the region into a “ASEAN camp” and a “Vietnam camp.”

² Wilfred Hermann, “Conflict Potentials in Southeast Asia,” *Military Technology*, 29, no. 8 (1995): 8–15; Robert Scalapino “China’s Role in Southeast Asia – Looking Towards the 21st Century,” in Richard Grant’s edited *China and Southeast Asia—Into the 21st Century*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1993; Michael Leifer, “Conflict and Regional Order in Southeast Asia,” *Adelphi Papers*, no. 162, 1980.

Undoubtedly, this was partly the result of the Cold War when Southeast Asia was one of the many “competition grounds” between the two superpowers. While the circumstances may have changed since then, there are still those who believe that the alignment with external powers continued to be an obstacle / critical consideration toward greater Southeast Asian integration. Jonathan Pollack’s (1993)³ opinion did not differ much from the earlier period when he opined that “the future dynamics of Southeast Asia security will be shaped by the nations of the region – by their ability to collaborate with one another *and their capacity to shape acceptable understandings in Asia’s major powers, especially the People’s Republic of China* (italics added).”

On the other hand, a number of recent articles alluded to the possibility of the “China threat” being a unifying factor that could encourage greater Southeast Asian integration. These included Zara Dian (1994)⁴ and Dana Dillion (1997)⁵ among others. Allen Whiting (1997)⁶ examined the “China threat” to Southeast Asia security in greater detail and demonstrated that while there may be a “China threat” to each Southeast Asian nation, perceptions among them tended to differ because of historical circumstances and current interests.

Sheldon Simon (1997)⁷ presented an alternative view of the “China threat”. He did not see China as being able to threaten Southeast Asian security within the next ten

³ Jonathan Pollack, “Security Dynamics between China and Southeast Asia: Problems and Potential Approaches.” in *China and Southeast Asia – Into the 21st Century*, edited by Richard Grant, Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1993.

⁴ Zara Dian, “The Spratlys Issue,” *Asian Defence Journal* (November 1994): 6.

⁵ Dana Dillion, “Contemporary Security Challenges in Southeast Asia,” *Parameters*, 27, no. 1 (Spring 97): 119–133.

⁶ Allen Whiting, “ASEAN eyes China,” *Asian Survey*, 37, no. 3 (March 1997): 299-322.

⁷ Simon Sheldon, “Alternative Visions of Security in the Asia Pacific,” *Pacific Affairs*, 69, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 381-395.

to fifteen years because of its lack of power projection capabilities. Hence, in the short term, this may not be sufficient to propel the Southeast Asian countries toward collective security.

Clearly the end of the Cold War and the still awakening China have left the Southeast Asian countries with an unprecedented opportunity to try to construct a new security regime for themselves. Instead of living under the shadows of the great powers, they will be able to construct a security community that addresses their own needs. However, they will continue to need to work an *inclusive* security arrangement with the great powers in order to ensure the acceptability of any such security regime.

Challenges Internal to Southeast Asia

Many authors have discussed the bilateral and multi-lateral animosities / conflicts among the Southeast Asian countries as the key obstacle toward a common Southeast Asian security. Among these bilateral conflicts mentioned, the major ones included:

1. The historical animosity between Thailand and Vietnam.⁸
2. The mutual distrust between Malaysia and Singapore⁹ and the contention over ownership of Pedra Branca Island.
3. The disputes over Sabah between Malaysia and the Philippines.
4. The disputes over the Sipadan and Ligitan Islands between Malaysia and Indonesia.
5. The disputes over ownership of various Spratly and Paracel Islands.¹⁰

⁸ See for example Dana Dillion, "Contemporary Security Challenges in Southeast Asia," *Parameters* (Spring 97): 119-133.

⁹ See for example Tim Huxley, "Singapore and Malaysia: A Precarious Balance," *The Pacific Review*, 4, no. 3 (1991): 204-213; Dana Dillion, *op cit.*

6. The border problems between Thailand and Malaysia.

The end of the Cambodian conflict was seen by many as the loss of a unifying theme within ASEAN. Various authors such as Lee Gardner (1994)¹¹ and N. Ganesan (1995)¹² have suggested the lack of a commonly perceived threat as being a critical hindrance to greater security cooperation in the region. Ganesan (1995) highlighted that an impact of the post-Cold War era was the "increasing state-centric policy of the ASEAN countries" which could "renew old disputes".

The recent increase in the volume and profile of arms acquisitions by the Southeast Asian countries has also caught the eyes of many analysts. While some characterized it as an "arms race" in the region, others took a more benign perspective by terming it an "arms rush." *The Straits Times* (15 Aug 97) commenting on the recent near simultaneous acquisitions of helicopter carriers, frigates, submarines and SU-30s aircraft by Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia respectively, noted that the pattern of interactive arms procurement would not in any way promote regional confidence.

Paul Dibb (1997)¹³ in a recent article argued that despite the recent arms acquisitions by the various Southeast Asian countries, serious deficiencies exist in these armed forces. Critical weaknesses included the lack of integrated support, joint force

¹⁰ See for example Wilfred Hermann, "Conflict Potentials in Southeast Asia," *Military Technology*, 19, no. 8 (1995): 8-15; Zara Dian, "The Spratlys Issue," *Asian Defence Journal* (Nov 1994): 6; and Damon Bristow, "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Maritime Disputes between ASEAN Member States," *RUSI Journal* (August 1996): 31-38.

¹¹ Lee Gardner, "Regional Resilience – The Imperative for Maritime Security Cooperation in Southeast Asia," *Naval War College Review*, 47, no. 2, Sequence 346 (Spring 94): 41 – 59.

¹² N. Ganesan, "Rethinking ASEAN as a Security Community in SEA," *Asian Affairs* Vol. 21 no. 4 (Winter 95): 210-227.

¹³ Paul Dibb, "Defence Force Modernization in Asia: Towards 2000 and beyond," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 18, no. 4 (March 1997): 347-360.

doctrine, and defense industrial support. The Southeast Asian countries were prone to such weaknesses and also lacked any inter-country integration.

Sheldon Simon (1996)¹⁴ alluded to the fact that the Southeast Asian countries also did not have a consensus view on the way ahead for the region. While Thailand and Singapore favored a more *inclusive* approach that included the engagement of external powers; Malaysia and Indonesia favored a more *exclusive* approach without external power influence.

Various authors have also cited the diversity in history, language, religion and race as hindering the closer integration of the region. Michael Leifer (1980)¹⁵ highlighted the issues of the challenge of state identity, legitimacy, and historical antagonisms. The legacies of the transfers of sovereignty also left many territorial disputes, which add to the challenges to be overcome for any security mechanism.

Mark Rolls (1994)¹⁶ was more pointed in stating that ASEAN did not form more than a limited security regime, let alone a community. So long as countries' armed forces are targeted at each other or certain members, then it fails the "defining test" of a security community. He used Tim Huxley's (1991)¹⁷ example of the opposing orientation between the Malaysian and Singapore Armed Forces as an illustration of one of many intra-ASEAN conflicts.

¹⁴ Simon Sheldon, "Alternative Visions of Security in the Asia Pacific," *Pacific Affairs*, 69, no. 3 (Fall 1996).

¹⁵ Michael Leifer, "Conflict and Regional Order in Southeast Asia," *Adelphi Papers*, no. 162 (1980).

¹⁶ Mark Rolls, "Security Co-operation in Southeast Asia: An Evolving Process," *Contemporary Security Policy*, 15, no. 2 (August 1994): 65-79.

¹⁷ Tim Huxley, "Singapore and Malaysia: A Precarious Balance," *The Pacific Review*, 4 no. 3 (1991).

Clearly there are still many outstanding security challenges that need to be addressed. The issue is whether such challenges will hinder the development of a security community or will they provide the impetus to develop a security community to address them. This thesis will explore this issue in greater detail.

Internal to SEA / Domestic Challenges Within ASEAN Countries

Dana Dillion (1997)¹⁸ highlighted the difficulties of ASEAN countries coming together as a common security community because of the inward orientation of the armed forces. This was compounded by the end of the Cold War and Indo-Chinese conflict, which reduced the need to look outward even more. The TNI-AD (Indonesian Armed Forces) still has a tradition of being more concerned with domestic stability as enshrined by its *dwi-fungsi* ("dual function") doctrine where the armed forces were both a defense force and an internal security / nation building element. The Royal Thai Armed Forces (RTAF) have also been closely intertwined with domestic politics and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) were also similarly politicized under Marcos¹⁹. While the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) do not have any explicit role in domestic politics, they have the implicit role of protecting the rights of the *bumiputras* (indigenous Malays) of the country against the Chinese minority. Dillion concluded that the only outwardly oriented armed forces in the ASEAN were the Singapore Armed Forces because of their peculiar geo-political and geo-strategic considerations.

¹⁸ Dana Dillion, "Contemporary Security Challenges in Southeast Asia," *Parameters*, 27, no. 1 (Spring 97): 119–133.

¹⁹ In the recent years, both the Thai and Philippines Armed Forces have gradually shifted towards a less politicized and more professional posture in line with the political climate of their respective countries.

Authors such as Huxley (1993)²⁰ and Dillion (1997) also highlighted the lack of coherence in the regional armed forces development, as another obstacle to the formation of a regional security framework. Huxley (1993) highlighted that the arms acquisitions of many regional armed forces (with the exception of Singapore) were characterized by domestic considerations such as budgetary considerations, prestige factor, and even corruption. This led to a lack of coherence in force development. The capability build-up was often not commensurate with the resources expended.

The domestic political weaknesses of many Southeast Asian countries had also been cited as a factor hindering the closer integration of the region. Amitav Acharya (1991)²¹ opined that any military pact in Southeast Asia was of little use because of the domestic weaknesses of the countries involved. In it he also mentioned that the lack of inter-operability among the various armed forces was a main obstacle toward any establishment of a defense community in the region.

Again we see the challenges that the Southeast Asian countries have to overcome in the search for a collective security arrangement. The issue is whether such challenges are sufficiently powerful to deter the formation of a security grouping, or if such challenges can provide the impetus to search for a collective solution. Clearly, there are mutual benefits in having a collective security arrangement that can mitigate the individual inadequacies. This thesis will examine if the Southeast Asian countries can seize the opportunities and if so, the likely route that they will take to accomplish that.

²⁰ Tim Huxley, *Insecurity in the ASEAN Region*, London: Royal United Services Institute of Defence Studies Whitehall Paper Series (1993).

²¹ Amitav Acharya, "The Association of Southeast Asian Nations: 'Security Community' or 'Defense Community', " *Pacific Affairs*, 64, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 159-178.

NATO-Style Common Security Model

Among the authors who have alluded to a NATO-style security arrangement for Southeast Asia, some have opined that the pre-conditions for such a situation did not even exist among the Southeast Asian countries. The main missing piece was the lack of a common perceived threat. Even the potential “China Threat” would not seem to come close to what the former Soviet Union threat did for Western Europe during the Cold War years. On the other hand, the lack of a dominant power such as the United States for Western Europe also constrained the applicability of such a model. Many others alluded to more diverse factors such as cultural differences, political will, and institutional structures as hindering the development of a common security structure like NATO. These factors are examined in greater detail in chapter four.

Balance Of Power Security Model

Dina Zinnes et al (1969)²² defined the “balance of power” being a particular distribution of power amongst countries of a system, such that no single state and no existing alliance have an overwhelming or preponderance amount of power. Realists tend to see this concept as being fundamental to world politics and security. This concept was most commonly applied to the Cold War era and the nineteenth century European system.

Bruce Grant (1978)²³ examined the applicability of the concept of balance of power for Southeast Asia and concluded that “... the concept of a balance of power does not readily fit into the known dispositions of either the states within the region or the

²² Dina Zinnes, *A Test of some properties of the Balance of Power Theory in Computer Simulation*. Mimeo 1969.

²³ Bruce Grant, “The Security of Southeast Asia,” *Adelphi Papers* no. 142.

powers external to it. If history is a guide, petty rivalries within the region and external hegemony or pervasive penetration from outside is a more likely pattern."

Nicola Baker and Leonard Sebastian (1996)²⁴ also agreed that the assumptions of the balance of power theory has no resonance in Asia security concerns which has more to do with internal concerns like political stability, economic growth and social cohesion. Desmond Ball (1996)²⁵ also agreed that the balance of power theory having little resonance in Asia where security concerns are much more domestically oriented. As such, the concept would have limited utility as it does not address the fundamental challenge facing the Southeast Asian countries.

More recent writers tended to examine the balance of power theory on two levels –the intra-Southeast Asia balance of power, and the balance of power between Southeast Asia and external parties. Most concluded that the challenges mentioned above would severely constrain the Southeast Asian countries from achieving a balance of power situation. Hence, it would be most unlikely that a common security grouping could be formed to provide any form of balance of power with the external parties.

Coral Bell (1968)²⁶ saw the balance of power concept as essentially an European concept that would be foreign to Southeast East Asia. It may also be argued that historically, the Southeast East Asian countries had either been vassal states of China or colonial states of the western powers, and this would reduce the chance of such a concept working. On the other hand, it is also not obvious that such a mechanism would

²⁴ Nicola Baker and Leonard Sebastian, "The Problem of Parachuting: Strategic Studies and Security in the Asia / Pacific Region," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 18, no. 3 (September 1995): 15-31.

²⁵ Desmond Ball, *The Transformation of Security in the Asia / Pacific Region*, London: Frank Cass, 1996.

be acceptable to external powers like China. In general, recent writings had tended to put an increasing emphasis on the view that the security of the Southeast Asian region cannot be solely determined without consideration of external power influence.

Michael Sheehan (1996)²⁷ has pointed out another interesting perspective of the application of balance of power theory to Southeast Asian security cooperation. The balance of power theory tends to breed obsession with relative power and in the longer term, breeds distrust. Hence, such theories could actually be counterproductive to closer Southeast Asian security cooperation in the long term.

Concert Of Europe / Asia Security Model

Daniel Moron (1995)²⁸ defined the "Concert of Europe" as a "vague consensus" and "the habit of acting together," rather than a formal alliance. The aim was to avoid "total war" during that nineteenth century. There was an implicit acceptance of there being a difference between weak and strong states. The aim was just to come together to solve common problems.

Writing in 1968, Coral Bell said that the "Concert of Asia" would be the more likely scenario (by default) as the alternative concepts of containment and balance of power would be either hostile or foreign and hence less acceptable to China. She believed that containment would be too costly a strategy for the United States and presumably the Southeast Asian countries as well. On the other hand, China (the

²⁶ Coral Bell, *The Asian Balance of Power: A Comparison with European Precedents*. Adelphi Papers, no. 44, 1968.

²⁷ Michael Sheehan, *The Balance of Power – History and Theory*. London: Routledge, 1996.

²⁸ Daniel Moron, *The Fog of Peace: The Military Dimensions of the Concert of Europe*. Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, June 1995.

Middle Kingdom) has never accepted the concept of a balance of power similar to the European precedent. Admittedly, while the circumstances may have changed over the last thirty years, Bell's concerns about the impact of China's history on any Southeast Asian security arrangement remain very much valid today.

Leif Rosenberger (1996)²⁹ argued that the spread of democracy, proliferation of information technology, and institutional flexibility as possible factors supporting the model of a "Concert of Asia." Presumably, this would include the Southeast Asian countries in this wider "Concert of Asia." The enhanced interaction brought by all these factors will serve to bring the Southeast Asia countries together and form a de-facto "Concert of Asia."

Douglas Stuart (1997)³⁰ provided a more balanced examination of the similarities and differences between Asia in the 1990s and Europe in the Nineteenth Century. The similarities shared between the two regions at two different times included a stage of fundamental economic development, which brought about major social and political change, and the fear of a major war. But he cautioned against being overly optimistic about the comparison because of the cultural heterogeneity, political diversity, and geographical dissimilarities among the SEA countries.

²⁹ Leif Rosenberger, "The Cultural Challenge for a Concert of Asia," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 18, no. 2 (September 1996): 135-162.

³⁰ Douglas Stuart, "Towards Concert in Asia," *Asian Survey*, 37, no. 3 (March 1997): 229-244.

The Optimists

While the above authors have tended to be more guarded in their beliefs of a common Southeast Asian security, some other authors have displayed a more optimistic view of the situation.

Lee Cardner (1994)³¹ saw the Southeast Asian countries as having sufficient common interests for a more integrated regional security grouping. The maintenance of the sea lines of communications (SLOCs) to promote economic growth was cited as one such reason. He further mentioned that “while the U.S. military presence continues to be important, there is a growing awareness of an imperative to improve the region’s own ability to cope with the security problems without direct American involvement”.

Kishore Mahbubani (1995),³² a senior Singaporean official, likewise expressed a sense of optimism that the Southeast Asian countries were experiencing a new sense of community, which could prove to be the turning point for the region and provide the necessary impetus towards greater regional cooperation. He saw this as part of the larger *renaissance of East Asia* where countries were coming together for mutual benefits as opposed to the rivalries of the past.

Bilver Singh (1992),³³ a keen Southeast Asian observer, expressed similar guarded optimism that the post-Cold War era could provide the environment for the SEA countries to reconcile their previous differences. This could in turn bring about the beginnings of a new security arrangement in the region. He suggested some possible

³¹ Lee Cardner, “Regional Resilience – The Imperative for Maritime Security Cooperation in Southeast Asia,” *Naval War College Review*, 47, no. 2, Sequence 346 (Spring 94): 41 – 59.

³² Kishore Mahbubhani, “The Pacific Impulse,” *Survival*, 37 no. 1 (Spring 1995): 105-120.

³³ Bilver Singh, “Confidence Building, Security Measures and Security Regimes in Southeast Asia,” *Asian Defence Journal* (3/92): 5-17.

building blocks for the way ahead based on the model proposed by Desmond Ball, which included various confidence building measures.

Conclusion

From this brief survey of the literature, it could be seen that there are many challenges that the Southeast Asian countries have yet to overcome, in order to promote a collective security framework. While some recent authors exhibited slightly greater optimism towards such a possibility, there have been limited discussions on the form that the proposed security framework could take and conditions that would be necessary to bring this about. There has also been the tendency to impose "European-style models" upon Southeast Asia to see if they might fit.

This thesis contributes to the discussions on Southeast Asian security by examining in closer details the following:

1. What does the concept of common security actually mean to the Southeast Asian countries?
2. Is the NATO common security model (one of the European-style model) suitable, acceptable to, and feasible for the Southeast Asian countries?
3. What are the necessary and sufficient characteristics required for a Southeast Asian security model?

CHAPTER THREE

SECURITY AND THE SOUTHEAST ASIA COUNTRIES

Definition of “Security”

By definition, security is the absence of both real and perceived threat.¹ As such, the obvious follow-on questions would be what is the definition of threat and threat to what? One way to begin would be to define “threat” as an action that would challenge the existing status quo or some cherished end states. These end states may include a particular way of life, some peculiar social organization and certain pattern of social distribution of power. The acceptance of such a definition will imply that the need to address the broader concept of *comprehensive security*, which extends beyond the military security realm. Comprehensive security should encompass economic security, political security, internal security (social stability), and military security. Individually, these various security aspects form part of the overall spectrum of security for a particular country. While the focus of this thesis is on military security, the other aspects of a nation’s security must not be overlooked. As the thesis will go on to show, in the Southeast Asian context, military security and the other aspects of security are mutually reinforcing. On many occasions, military security can only be a follow-on product of the other forms of security and it may play a supporting (rather than predominant) role in the overall security framework.

From the definition above, another important point to note is that security is often a state of the mind as the threat can be real or perceived. In the Southeast Asian context, the perception of threat often plays an equally, if not more, important role (than

¹ See Leszek Buszynski, “ASEAN Security in the Post-Cold War Era” in *Asia in the 21st Century* edited by Michael Bellow, Washington D.C.: National Defense University, 1994.

the actual threat) in influencing the pace of security cooperation. The historical legacies of mutual distrust among various Southeast Asian countries have inhibited current security cooperation.

There is also the need to make a distinction between *active* versus *passive* security as defined by Lipschultz (1997).² While most Southeast Asian countries are presently working toward the concept of *passive security*, where the primary aim is to prevent others from imposing their will onto oneself; it was not too long ago that certain Southeast Asian countries embraced the concept of *active security* where the aim was to try to influence the security of one's neighbors in order to promote one's security. This fundamental difference would again surface in the discussion on a viable common security regime.

Finally, while acknowledging that comprehensive security means more than military security, the increasingly open information and economic environment means that the state is increasingly less able to influence its economic and informational security. The de-linking of economic and political security is well discussed by Ackerman (1993).³ The implication for this thesis is that the attempt to redress the differential in one area may push the SEA countries toward greater security cooperation in other areas. Alternatively, it could also push some countries to attempt to decrease their insecurity individually in other areas, thereby causing greater insecurity to the region on the overall.

² Ronnie Lipschultz, *On Security*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.

³ The four reasons highlighted by Ackerman for the delinking of the economic with the security include (1) that economic and security issues unfold at different speeds with the latter usually being faster; (2) that while economic trends are usually self-correcting, security issues are not; (3) the ability of governments to influence the economic outcomes are eroded by the growing size of the markets and transnational forces; and (4) hostile economic acts are loosing their sting as the market come up with ways to bypass them. See *Adelphi Paper* no. 275.

Concepts of Security Architecture

Within the concept of *comprehensive security*, which transcends the military sphere to include social, political and economic, there is a need to distinguish between the terms – *collective security*, *cooperative security* and *common security*. While there are no commonly agreed upon definitions of these terms, this thesis uses the definitions proposed by David Dewitt (1994).⁴ Among the three definitions, *common security* is the most stringent, while *collective security* seems to be the least stringent in terms of criteria.

Collective security in a sense is the most loosely used to just mean a shared perspective of what is deemed as security issues affecting everyone in the region. Different authors have defined this differently as to whether it includes the need to undertake collective actions to secure the member countries' security interests, especially in the military realm.⁵ But this is not unimportant as it was until very recently, many would argue that the Southeast Asian countries did not even see themselves as anything like a grouping with shared interests. It was only with the formation of the ASEAN Regional Forum and with the enlargement of ASEAN to include all but Cambodia that the consciousness of a collective security regime became more accentuated.

Common security has a tendency for a common threat perception requirement and those member states provide for a common response towards a threat to any particular member of the grouping. It is a much more formalized approach to security

⁴ David Dewitt, "Common, Comprehensive and Cooperative Security," *The Pacific Review*, 7, no. 1 (1994): 1-15.

⁵ For an example of this difference, see Matake Kamiya, "The U.S.-Japan Alliance and Regional Security Cooperation: Towards a Double-Layered Security System," in *Restructuring the U.S. – Japan Alliance* edited by Ralph Cossa, Washington D.C.: CSIS Press, 1997.

issues. For example, the NATO and Warsaw Pact security models are often cited as good examples of a common security approach. That required common response to a threat to one or more member countries has been enshrined in NATO's Article 5 and 6.

On the other hand, cooperative security falls somewhere along the spectrum between collective and common security. The main differences between a common and cooperative security concept is that the latter moves away from a deterrent mindset; has a more flexible structure that allows multi-lateral consultations as opposed to a unified mechanism; and there is much more latitude in the security outlook of the members (a *common* outlook is not necessary). Divergence of views is not precluded and members only seek to work together to derive some commonality.

While it was generally acknowledged that a *common security regime* is not suitable at this time, this thesis examines if such a regime would develop in Southeast Asia in the longer term and to draw out the necessary conditions for it to come about. Wiseman (1992)⁶ has argued that the Asia Pacific region is too diverse to talk about any *common security regime*. The reasons mentioned included differences in political systems, security outlooks and cultural diversity. All these factors must be examined in detail to see if they are necessary or sufficient for a *common security regime* in Southeast Asia in the future.

From the diverse definitions above, we can see that security encompasses a whole range of issues and the spectrum of ideas on security regime, ranging from the stringent *common security regime* to the less stringent *collective security regime*. Within the *common security regime*, there is yet another more stringent idea of a *common defense community*. The aim of this thesis is to examine how far the Southeast Asian

⁶ Geoffrey Wiseman, "Common Security in the Asia-Pacific Region," *The Pacific Review*, 5, no. 1 (1992.): 42-59.

countries will go, in the next five to ten years, in building a cooperative, or even common security architecture

Security Community versus Defense Community

Another useful distinction made by Amitav Acharya (1991)⁷ is the difference between a *security community* versus a *defense community*. The former just connotes the sharing of security perspectives; discussion on future direction on security issues; and perhaps a commonly agreed framework for resolution of conflict. This includes the pre-requisites of: (1) an absence of armed inter-state conflict; (2) absence of competitive arms build-up; (3) institutional processes; and (4) a high degree of political and economic integration as a necessary pre-condition for peaceful relationships.⁸ On the other hand, a defense community is much more stringent in that it requires a common (inclusive of military responses) approach to threats. This contrasts with Ganesan (1995)⁹ who saw a *security community* as having the ability to intervene diplomatically to prevent use of force and include a *common military response to external threat*. For the purpose of this thesis, the subtle distinction made by Acharya (1991)¹⁰ was used. As the thesis will show, a Southeast Asian defense community could only follow the formation of a security community.

⁷ Amitav Acharya, "The Association of Southeast Asian Nations: Security Community or Defence Community?" *Pacific Affairs* (Summer 1991): 158 – 178.

⁸ See Acharya's definition in "A Security Regime in Southeast Asia?" in *The Transformation of Security in the Asia Pacific Region* edited by Desmond Ball, London" Frank Cass, 1996.

⁹ N Ganesan "Rethinking ASEAN as a Security Community in SEA." *Asian Affairs*, 21 no. 4 (Winter 95): 210-227.

¹⁰ Amitav Acharya, "The Association of Southeast Asian Nations: 'Security Community' or 'Defense Community,'" *The Pacific Affairs*, 64, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 159 – 178.

Security Interests of Southeast Asia Countries in the Foreseeable Future

Before we examine the applicability of a common security model for Southeast Asia in the next five to ten years, it is necessary to briefly review the security challenges as perceived by each of the ten Southeast Asian countries in the foreseeable future. It is also important to review the key issues that each Southeast Asian countries faces in the spheres of economic, political, social, and military security. The broad conclusions are summarized at the end of the section. (The shaded boxes denote the projected key priorities amongst the 4 aspects for each country.)

Table 1: Projected Security Priorities of the Southeast Asian Countries

Country	Economic	Political	Social	Military
Brunei	To transit toward a more diverse and less oil-dependent economy.	To promote the continued legitimacy of the monarchy regime.	To prevent the economic dominance of the minority Chinese from adversely affecting the country's social stability.	To maintain the proficiency of her armed forces in the protection of her maritime and land boundaries and resources. This includes the security of her EEZ claims and territorial disputes with Malaysia.
Cambodia	To narrow the economic disparities with the rest of Southeast Asia.	To promote the stability and legitimacy of the regime in the eyes of its people and the international community.	To reconcile the supporters of the former Communist and Royalist regimes with the supporters of the current Hun Sen regime	To prevent the interference of its domestic situation by its larger neighbors, esp. Vietnam, Thailand, and China.
Indonesia	To stabilize the economy and rid it of the inefficiencies brought about by crony monopolies and less effective macro-economic policies.	To ensure the smooth transition into the post-Suharto era.	To stabilize the domestic insurrections (esp. in Aceh, East Timor, and Irian Jaya) and redress the economic disparities between the have and the have-nots (often be seen as between the Chinese versus the non-Chinese).	To prevent any armed insurrections from threatening the stability of the regime and protect its economic interests in the South China Sea.

Table 1 (Continued) : Projected Security Priorities of the Southeast Asian Countries

Country	Economic	Political	Social	Military
Laos	To narrow the economic gap with the rest of Southeast Asia.	To transit towards a more open political regime to enhance the legitimacy of the regime.	To limit the adverse influences / vices of the market economy, and integrate the substantial minorities into the main stream of Laotian society.	To prevent any external interference by its larger and more developed neighbors (esp. Vietnam).
Malaysia	To stabilize its economy and transit into the status of a newly industrializing country (NIC) or developed country by 2020.	To maintain the dominance of the ruling United Malaysian National Organization (UMNO) coalition.	To preserve the primacy of the indigenous Malays in the social and political arenas and avoid a further enlargement of the socio-economic gap with other races, esp. the Chinese.	To modernize its armed forces towards enhanced conventional and power projection capabilities to enforce its EEZ claims and maintain its SLOCs.
Myanmar (Burma)	To narrow the economic gap between itself and the rest of Southeast Asia.	To enhance the legitimacy of the regime in the eyes of its people and external parties.	To unite the people, inclusive of the minorities, from different backgrounds to rebuild the nation.	To prevent the insurgencies of the minorities from external influence, while seeking military aid from China.
The Philippines	To narrow the gap with the rest of Southeast Asia and overcome the critical infrastructure bottlenecks to develop the economy.	To ensure the continued development of the nascent democratic system.	To resolve any outstanding issues with the Muslim minorities and narrow the income distribution between the have and the have-nots.	To enforce its claims on the EEZ with its limited military capabilities and counter any separatist insurgencies.
Singapore	To maintain the vibrancy of the economy and stay one step of the regional competitors who are narrowing the gap very quickly.	To maintain the dominance of the ruling party which has been perceived as being the cornerstone to the continued stability and growth of the country.	To enhance the sense of national identity in a rapidly changing environment and redress any social alienation brought about by rapid economic and social changes.	To maintain the edge in the armed forces capabilities to deter any potential threat.
Thailand	To stabilize its economy and move into the league of the NIC.	To ensure that the political instability will not transit into wider instability nor lead to a re-politicized military.	To resolve the remaining tensions between the minorities and the population at the peripheral with the rest of the population.	To build up its conventional military capabilities to enforce its EEZ on both the Gulf of Siam and Andaman Sea flanks and prevent the spillover from its neighbors' domestic conflicts (include

Table 1 (Continued) : Projected Security Priorities of the Southeast Asian Countries

Country	Economic	Political	Social	Military
Thailand (Cont'd)				Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar).
Vietnam	To transition into a market economy to catch up with the rest of Southeast Asia.	To promote the legitimacy of the regime through superior economic performance.	To prevent any serious social disparities from developing during the transition towards a market economy.	To prevent China from threatening its EEZ interests and land borders.

From the above, the following main themes could be drawn for the tapestry of Southeast Asian security concerns:

Political security and social stability underpinned by economic stability are still fundamental challenges that have to be overcome by many Southeast Asian countries. Without the social stability, the economic development could stagnate which might erode the legitimacy of the government in power. The 1997 Asian currency crisis highlighted this vulnerability of many of the Southeast Asian countries. Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia have to ensure that their economies continue to grow and deliver the social services and improvements to avoid risking social instability brought about by widespread economic difficulties. On the other hand, there is the urgent need for countries like Vietnam, Myanmar (Burma), and Laos to get out of the vicious circle of instability and economic stagnation.

Economic concerns dominate in the majority of the countries, be it trying to narrow the gap, diversify the economy, or stay ahead of the pack. This is an area of both potential cooperation and conflict. For example, the formalization of many "growth triangles" (economic partnerships involving three countries based on their areas of relative comparative advantage) could more closely tie the regional economies together. This enhanced interaction and inter-dependence would tend to increase the scope of the security agenda in all aspects and lessen the traditional suspicions or distrust among

countries. For example, the Singapore-Johor-Riau Growth Triangle and the Southern Thailand-Northern Malaysia-Sumatra Growth Triangle have led to increased cooperation between the countries in the region.

On the other hand, closer economic cooperation could also lead to more intense rivalries, resulting in conflicts and friction between the countries. For example, Malaysia's attempts to surpass Singapore economically have often created friction through economic and non-economic competition. Greater economic interdependence between Southeast Asian countries has also accentuated the foreign labor and immigration issues that have often plagued intra-ASEAN relations. As further examined in the next chapter, these economic and social issues are often closely tied to the issues of political legitimacy of the regional governments.

Given that many regional governments drew their legitimacy from superior economic performance and the ability to defend the interests of their people, there are both real and perceived needs to maintain the growth record and not to be seen as being trampled on by other countries. For example, commentators have argued that the price for keeping the domestic population quiet is to ensure that the economic well being of the people is continually enhanced. On the other hand, the perceived weakness of the Philippines and Indonesian governments to defend their expatriate labor from being subjected to the laws of the host countries would also challenge the legitimacy of the governments. Hence, the focus on economics has much to do with maintaining and enhancing the legitimacy of the governments.

Paradoxically, in the next five to ten years, when various Southeast Asian countries are committed to modernizing their armed forces, but military security does not seem to be high on the agenda. For example, immediately after the regional currency crisis of October 1997, the military budgets of the Malaysian, Thai and Indonesian

Armed Forces were cut. This reflects the lower priority accorded to military security.

Issues of military cooperation are placed on the backburner while economic and environmental issues are being addressed first. The agenda for any security cooperation would tend to be economic rather than military.

Besides the priorities accorded to different aspects of security by the Southeast Asian governments, there is also the need to understand the background conflict and cooperation potential between the Southeast Asian countries before we discuss the prospect of any common security regime. The following table summarizes the background issues between the Southeast Asian countries.

Table 2. SEA Countries Conflict and Cooperation Potential over the next 5 – 10 Years

Country	Conflict Potential	Cooperation Potential
Brunei	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Territorial dispute with Malaysia over Louisa Reef, Limbang territories, and EEZ.• Historical distrust created by 1962 Malaysian attempt to destabilize Bruneian government.• A claimant to part of the Spratly Island chain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Close military and economic ties with Singapore because of a common security outlook and close ties between the leaders.• Environmental protection and management (e.g. management and prevention of forest fires, controlling illegal logging operations, and management of water resources).
Cambodia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Territorial dispute with Vietnam and historical distrust created by invasion.• Territorial dispute with Thailand over the naval base on Kaoh Koh Island allegedly annexed by Thailand during the Cambodian conflict.• Thailand's alleged harboring of anti-government forces along their common border.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic cooperation with Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, China, and Myanmar on the Greater Mekong Delta Project.• Counter-drug operations with the other Mekong Delta countries.• Political and diplomatic recognition of the current government.

Table 2(Cont'd). SEA Countries Conflict and Cooperation Potential over the next 5 – 10 Years

Country	Conflict Potential	Cooperation Potential
Indonesia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Territory disputes with Malaysia over Sipadan-Ligitan Islands and the Kalimantan border. • EEZ and seabed boundary dispute with the Philippines in the Celebes Sea. • Dispute with Vietnam over the maritime boundary near the Natunas Islands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic cooperation with Singapore and Malaysia to develop the Singapore-Johor-Riau Growth Triangle; with Thailand and Malaysia on the northern Growth Triangle. • Anti-piracy patrols with Singapore and Malaysia. • Environmental and pollution control with Singapore and Malaysia. • Economic stabilization with regional countries (e.g. credit and export financing schemes to restart its stalled economy). • Illegal migrant labor controls. • Traffic management for the crowded Malacca Straits.
Laos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical distrust of Thailand over alleged Thai support of anti-Communist forces along the border. • Being the buffer state caught between the stronger powers of Vietnam and Thailand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic cooperation with Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, China, and Myanmar on the Greater Mekong Delta Project. • Counter-drug operations with Thailand. • Control of illegal logging operations. • Transfer of nation building experience from other SEA countries (e.g. training of civil servants, attainment of necessary language proficiency for foreign service personnel to participate in international and regional forums).
Malaysia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Territorial disputes with Singapore over Pedra Branca Island and economic friction. • Border dispute with Thailand over territorial limits between Langkawi Island, and land border. • Dispute with Indonesia over Kalimantan border and Ligitan-Sipadan Islands. • One of the claimant to part of the Spratly Island chain. • Historical conflict with the Philippines over ownership of Sabah State. • Dispute with Thailand over EEZ and freedom of passage for fishing fleet in the Gulf of Siam. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic cooperation with Singapore and Indonesia and Thailand to promote the Growth Triangles. • Anti-piracy patrols and maintenance of SLOC through Malacca Straits with Singapore and Indonesia. • Illegal migrant labor control with Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand. • Traffic management of Malacca Straits with Singapore and Indonesia. • Overland bridge project with Thailand. • Economic stabilization with other SEA countries.

Table 2(Cont'd). SEA Countries Conflict and Cooperation Potential over the next 5 – 10 Years

Country	Conflict Potential	Cooperation Potential
Malaysia (Cont'd)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment protection and management with Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei and Thailand. • Resolution of Sabah sovereignty issue with the Philippines.
Myanmar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Border dispute with Thailand in the Andaman Sea and alleged Thai support of insurgents along the border. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counter-drug operations along the Thai-Myanmar border. • Greater Mekong Delta development project. • Political and diplomatic recognition (or mitigation of current diplomatic isolation) of current government. • Transfer of nation building experience from other SEA countries. • Economic investments from SEA countries to reduce dependence on PRC.
The Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dispute with Malaysia over the ownership of Sabah and Malaysia support for Muslims in the southern Philippines province of Mindanao. • Claimant to part of the Spratly and Paracel Island chains. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eager to attract economic investments from the rest of Southeast Asia to boost its economic development. • Diplomatic support of the SEA countries to counter possible PRC's assertiveness over claims of the Spratly islands. • Harmonization of foreign labor protection laws.
Singapore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dispute with Malaysia over the ownership of Pedra Branca Island. • Historical distrust of Malaysia. • Seen as a "Chinese Nut in a Malay Nutcracker" by being the only country in the region with a Chinese majority. • Management / punishment of illegal foreign labor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic cooperation with Malaysia and Indonesia to develop Johor and the Riau Islands. • Close ties with Indonesian leadership in recent years. • Tend to be closer to Thailand's security outlook for the region and support for continued U.S. presence. • Anti-piracy controls with Indonesia and Malaysia. • Traffic management of Malacca Straits. • Environmental protection and disaster management with Malaysia and Indonesia. • Access to Brunei's military training areas.

Table 2(Cont'd). SEA Countries Conflict and Cooperation Potential over the next 5 – 10 Years

Country	Conflict Potential	Cooperation Potential
Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land disputes with Malaysia and alleged Malaysian support for PULO (United Pattani Liberation Organization) Muslim separatists in southern Thailand. Border disputes with Myanmar over the claim of the Maoi Islands.¹¹ Border control with Laos and Cambodia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eager to take the lead and promote the Greater Mekong Delta Project. Water resource management with the other Mekong Delta countries. Counter-drug operations. Economic stabilization.
Vietnam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claimant to part of the Spratly and Paracel Island chains. Historical desire to influence Cambodian and Laotian politics to play the role of buffer states with Thailand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eager to attract economic investments from Southeast Asian countries to boost her economic development. Mekong Delta Project and water resource management. Political and diplomatic recognition from the rest of the world. Counter PRC's intransigence through solidarity with ASEAN.

From the above, it is not difficult to see the following three main themes in the conflict and cooperation potential among the Southeast Asian countries:

Territorial disputes left by the colonial/historical legacy and EEZ disputes created by the 1982 UNCLOS have been the main source of conflict among the Southeast Asian countries. Most of the disputes, with the exception of the Spratly Island issue, are bilateral in nature. As such, bilateral resolution of these disputes tends to be more effective than a multi-lateral mechanism.

Another main source of conflict is the historical distrust between countries because of the policy of active security to influence another state's affairs. The examples include Indonesia's 1965 attempt to destabilize the Malaysian and Singapore governments; Malaysia's 1962 attempt to destabilize the Bruneian monarchy; and

¹¹ Feb 1998, the 2 countries have agreed to be withdrawal of all military forces on the disputed islands while diplomatic solutions continue to be sought.

Vietnam's historical efforts to use Laos and Cambodia as buffer countries in its relations with Thailand.

The main source of cooperation potential seems to be economic in nature as the various countries try to narrow the economic gap with one another. But the short term potential for economic cooperation may give way to longer term economic rivalry when the various countries attain more similar economic development. This is already often been played out between Malaysia and Singapore. The rivalry and competition over control of economic resources in the region (especially the potential South China Sea resources if they prove to be true) will be another potential flashpoint in the region.

The complex issues brought about by economic development would also potentially cause social dislocation which most of the Southeast Asian countries will face in time to come. Problems of urban control, migrant control, and environment management will be common issues which the Southeast Asian countries have to tackle together to avoid the spillover effects onto another country.

Conclusions

Security in the Southeast Asian context encompasses the various dimensions of economic security, internal security (or social stability), political security, and military security. Among these, economic security is expected to dominate in the near term with military security being relegated to a lower priority. In most Southeast Asian countries, political stability in terms of the legitimacy of the ruling party and the strength of the state is a key concern. The focus on various aspects of security is arguably for the ultimate political security of the regime. Superior economic performance is necessary to provide enhanced credibility to many of the regimes.

While there would be much cooperation potential, especially in the economic realm, there remain substantial obstacles from the conflict potentials highlighted. These conflict potentials would not disappear overnight and would take much time and efforts by all parties to resolve. Until then, they would continue to shadow any security cooperation, especially military, among the Southeast Asian countries.

CHAPTER FOUR

A NATO-STYLE COMMON SECURITY MODEL FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA?

Having discussed the concepts of comprehensive security and the background concerns of the Southeast Asian countries, this chapter uses the NATO model¹ of common security to examine its feasibility, applicability and suitability in the Southeast Asian context. In the process, the analysis also draws out the salient building blocks required for a common Southeast Asian security architecture, if the NATO-style common security model is found to be inadequate for its purposes.

The varied reasons given for the workability of the NATO model for Western Europe included the following:

1. The dominant leadership provided by the U.S.²
2. A common threat perception against the former Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries.³
3. Relatively homogeneous and matured political structures among the Western European countries.⁴
4. Relatively similar economic structure and stage of economic development.
5. Strong and legitimate state organizations.⁵

¹ The pre-1990 NATO model characteristics will be used as it provides the more cogent form of a common security model.

² See for example, Wood's article "The U.S. and Southeast Asia: Towards a New Era," in *Asian Security to the Year 2000* edited by Dianne Smith, Washington D.C.: CSIS Press, 1996.

³ See for example, Lee Cardner, "Regional Resilience – The Imperative for Maritime Security Cooperation in Southeast Asia," *Naval War College Review*, 47, No 2, Sequence 346 (Spring 94): 41 – 59; Bilver Singh, "Confidence Building, Security Measures and Security Regimes in Southeast Asia," *Asian Defence Journal* (3/92): 5-17.

⁴ See for example, Lee Cardner, *op cit.*

6. Cultural similarities and common sense of history / identity.⁶
7. Shared history (inclusive of having fought two World Wars recently) and shared history of institution building.

It is the contention of this chapter while the above reasons have been cited by various authors for contributing to the success of the NATO system of common security, it is not apparent that each of them are necessary or sufficient. On the other hand, while NATO is an explicit common security framework, it encompasses more than just the military aspects.⁷ In the context of providing comprehensive security for Southeast Asia, the model may not be adequate even for military security.

Dominant Leadership

The most important reason cited for the viability of the NATO model is the dominant leadership role played by the United States in holding the common security grouping together for over fifty years. The equally valid point is that the Western European countries accepted (for reasons that will be explored) and continue to accept a U.S. leadership role. The recent debate over the future United States role in the security grouping has highlighted the interesting issue whether or not NATO will be able to do without the United States. One of the reasons for the participation of the United States in the NATO security grouping had been the perception that European countries, if left to

⁵ See for example, Sheldon Simon, "Regional Security Structures in Asia: The Question of Relevance," in *Collective Security in Europe and Asia* edited by Gary L Guertner. US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, March 1992.

⁶ See for example, Geoffrey Wiseman, "Common Security in the Asia-Pacific Region," *The Pacific Review*, 5, no. 1 (1992): 42-59; Bull's article quoted in Aaron Friedberg, "Ripe for Rivalry: Prospect for Peace in a Multipolar Asia," *International Security*, 18, no.3 (Winter 93/94): 5-33.

⁷ The key being the Marshall Plan to revitalize the post World War II economies of Western Europe.

their own would soon revert to historical conflicts which would lead to general instability for Europe. In the case of Southeast Asia, the possibilities of the United States, China and Japan playing this role will be examined in turn to see if any of these might come about in the next five to ten years. The questions will be whether they can play the necessary role and what will be the probability of them doing so.

United States

While the United States has consistently played an important role in the stability of the Southeast Asia (SEA) region, it is not obvious that it could or would be able to translate its forward presence into something similar to the NATO model. The domestic constraints of the United States and the regional politics caution against too high an optimism for such a possibility. Especially after the end of the Cold War, certain sectors of the United States' populace tended towards a more isolationist perspective and would not fully appreciate the need for the United States to continue to underwrite the security of the Asian countries. The recent 1997 Asian currency crisis again provide food or thought as many in the United States questioned the necessity and wisdom of the U.S. "bailing" out the "Asian competitors." The "slow" U.S. response to the region's crisis also renews doubts in the minds of the Southeast Asian countries on the reliability of continued U.S. leadership in regional matters.⁸

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has continued to draw down its forces overseas due to its threat assessment, domestic public opinion, and budgetary

⁸ During Secretary of Defense Bill Cohen testimony to the House Banking Committee in Feb 1998 (after his Asia trip), he admitted that for example, the "slow" U.S. response to help Thailand has hurt U.S. image as a supportive leader. (Extract from C-SPAN).

constraints. The Southeast Asian countries expect this drawdown to continue.⁹ While the United States has consistently maintained the importance of the freedom of passage through the regional SLOCs, it has not developed a comprehensive and coherent strategy in dealing with the potential conflicts in the region, especially the Spratly Island conflict. The public opinion in the United States is expected to swing towards a more isolationist stance and an aversion to underwriting Asian security in general. The East Asia Strategic Initiative (EASI) proposed by President Bush in 1990 has put increased emphasis on building a network of allies in the region that are capable of underwriting their own security, akin to the Nixon Doctrine. At the same time, there does not seem to be an obvious immediate threat to the SEA region. Coupled with the budgetary constraints faced in the downsizing of the United States military, it is most unlikely for the United States to undertake the role of a dominant leader in Southeast Asian security, especially if it involves the substantial commitment of military forces. However, the U.S. can be expected to continue to engage the regional countries to try to shape the security outlook in general.

From the perspective of China, a dominant leadership role by the United States in its "backyard" of Southeast Asia is also likely to be unacceptable. There is the equivalent of China's "Monroe Doctrine", where China may mistake such U.S. intentions as trying to contain it militarily. The United States can also be expected to be sensitive to such a perception in its overall efforts to constructively engage China. Asia will also

⁹ For example, see Larry Wortzel's "The ASEAN Regional Forum: Asian Security without an American Umbrella," *Asia Defence Journal* (November 1994): 23.

want the U.S. to be careful about signaling any hostile intent (real or perceived) to China.¹⁰

From the perspective of the Southeast Asian countries, it is also not obvious that everyone desires a dominant U.S. role. The Philippines, Myanmar, Indonesia, and Malaysia would be highly sensitive to *external influence* in the regional security situation given their history and current security outlook. The often-acrimonious debate over the human rights and other sensitive domestic issues between these countries (especially Indonesia and Myanmar) and the United States would also weaken their preference for any dominant U.S. leadership role. The *engagement* policy of the U.S. often conflicts with the *enlargement* policy, which tries to promote what the Southeast Asian countries perceive as American values, which are not entirely in consonance with their values and circumstances.¹¹ While Thailand, Singapore, and Brunei may be more receptive to a dominant U.S. role in the region; their preference would be tempered by the sensitivity towards China's perspective, as well as other SEA countries' sensitivities to this approach.¹²

Paradoxically, the continued provision of the United States security umbrella may reinforce the "clutch mentality" amongst the Southeast Asian countries against seeking alternative regional solutions to the region's security challenges. The U.S. would also

¹⁰ See for example, Douglas Paal, "China and the Easy Asian Security Environment: Complementarity and Competition," in *Living with China* edited by Ezra Vogel, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997.

¹¹ For an example of the conflicting priorities of the U.S. foreign policies as perceived by the SEA countries, see Douglas Freeman, *US National Security Strategy in Southeast Asia: A Reappraisal*. Monterey CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 1995.

¹² In Feb 1998 when Singapore offered the U.S. 7th Fleet the use of its new Changi Naval Base to strengthen the U.S. access to the region, the Malaysian press was quick to criticize this Singapore's move as potentially threatening to her interests. This episode showed that while U.S. engagement may be generally welcomed, it is by no means a neutral issue, which will continue to stir debate in the region. Likewise, Malaysia also views with suspicions Thailand's consideration to allow the establishment of an offshore U.S. pre-positioning depot in the region.

question its desire to continue shouldering a disproportional security role in this economically vibrant region. More likely, the United States would desire to practise the Nixon Doctrine that the regional countries should build up their own security mechanisms to handle their own challenges.¹³

However, the uncertainty of continued U.S. commitment in the region and the extent of this commitment has the effect of pushing the ASEAN countries towards seeking an alternative for the longer term. For example, it is quite clear to the Southeast Asian countries that while the U.S. continues its efforts to engage China and promotes the use of diplomatic actions to resolve the South China Sea conflicting claims, the U.S. does not have a clear security posture towards the region should China asserts its military might.¹⁴ Stephen Ham (1996)¹⁵ has termed this as *deterrance by ambiguity*. As such, the value of U.S. presence may be overstated.¹⁶ It is such uncertainties that have the paradoxical effect of encouraging collective actions among the Southeast Asian countries.¹⁷

¹³ Among those who have noted a decrease of interest in the region after the Cold War was Robert O'Neill in *Security Challenges for Southeast Asia after the Cold War*, Singapore: ISEAS, 1992.

¹⁴ Mara Hurwitt has termed this U.S. strategy towards the Spratly Conflict as a “no policy” strategy, which does not promote U.S. interests in the region. See *US Strategy in Southeast Asia: The Spratly Islands Dispute*. Ft Leavenworth: MMAS Thesis 1993.

¹⁵ Stephen Ham, *The Spratly Island Dispute: A Case for a New US Southeast Asia Security Strategy*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 1996.

¹⁶ This point was noted by Sheldon Simon “U.S. Strategy and Southeast Asia Security: Issues of Compatibility,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 14, no. 4 (March 1993): 301-313; and David Unger “Asian Anxieties, Pacific Overtures: Experiments in Security for a New Asia-Pacific Community,” *World Policy Journal* (Summer 1994): 37-44. In a lecture given to a group of CGSC students on 4 February 1998, a former U.S. diplomat while emphasizing the diplomatic moves to discourage China’s use of force in the region, also revealed the lack of a defined U.S. (military) posture towards the issue.

¹⁷ Arguably, it was the same consideration that encouraged Vietnam to join ASEAN, besides the perceived economic benefits.

China

The next most likely possibility of a dominant power emerging in Southeast Asia to lead a common security regime is China. The next ten years will see China's continued rise as an economic and military power in the region. Again the questions to be examined are whether China would be an acceptable, feasible, and suitable candidate to take on the role.

As China continues to grow, Southeast Asia will be important to China in three aspects: a source of market for its products, a source of investment, and control of its SLOCs. While China can develop alternatives for the first two, the last reason is most critical because there is no good alternative to it and China's external trade will continue to rely heavily on the SLOCs through Southeast Asia. Any instability in the region will severely disrupt China's economic growth and will in turn adversely affect its domestic stability. This could also be seen from China's keen interest to help stabilize the Southeast Asian economies in the October 1997 currency crisis. China understood that any drastic economic downturn could quickly translate into regional instability which would directly and indirectly affect China's own interests.

China's focus on maintaining her dominance in the region was already seen by her military actions taken in recent years. China has embarked on the development of a blue-water navy that can project power with the potential to protect her interests in Southeast Asia (admittedly, this also has the aim to influence the situation in Taiwan and Northeast Asia). It has long been rumored that China is looking into the acquisition of (or is building) an aircraft carrier.¹⁸ In the meantime, China has continued to build airstrips and forward naval logistic support posts on the Spratly and Paracel Islands to

¹⁸ It is rumored that China's ultimate intention is to extend her naval influence to the "second island chain" of the Asian coast, consisting the Philippines and the Marianas Islands.

mitigate its lack of sufficient power projection capability.¹⁹ The claims for its control of the Spratly and Paracel Islands (for its potential resources as well) are also closely tied to its desire to control the South China Sea SLOCs. Last but not least, China has invested time and resources in Myanmar naval bases in the Andaman Sea,²⁰ at the western end of the Straits of Malacca. This will allow it to influence the passage through the Straits of Malacca and provide it with an alternative land route to the Indian Ocean to circumvent any constriction on the South China Sea side.

While China definitely has the desire to influence security in Southeast Asia, it is not clear that it desire to do so in the framework of a common security regime in the foreseeable future. Traditionally, China has preferred to stay away from formal alliances and collective grouping, which it sees as restraining its flexibility of action toward individual countries. There is also the danger that in helping to set up a common security regime, it may undermine its ability to significantly influence the decisions of the regime in the longer term. In the worst scenario, the common security regime may turn against China itself.

On the other hand, while the heart is willing, the hand may not be capable. China's military might at this point is still rather antiquated compared to some of the Southeast Asian armed forces. It would be difficult to envisage the Southeast Asian countries agreeing to China's leadership from a purely technical viewpoint. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the People's Liberation Army's Navy (PLAN) budgets are also expected to be more constrained under the rule of President Jiang

¹⁹ See Ton That Tien's discussion in "Southeast Asia's Post Cold War Geopolitics," *Global Affairs* (Winter 1993): 40-57 on indications of China's military intentions.

²⁰ *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Nov 6 1997): 16-17.

Zemin, who does not have any military background.²¹ The PLA's limited forward deployment capability would also be stretched by the need to address the various other military challenges, including the Taiwan issue; the separatist movement in Xinjiang and Tibet; the situation in Northeast Asia; and the domestic stability in a time of rapid social dislocation brought about by the economic transformation. Therefore, in the next five to ten years, while a rise in the military might of China is expected, it is unlikely that she would be able to dominate Southeast Asia nor provide the leadership for a common security community in the region in the near future.

From the perspective of the Southeast Asian countries, it is also unlikely that they would be able to accept the leadership of China in the next five to ten years. China's record of using force to settle differences over the years and its historical support for the communist insurgents in Southeast Asia has damaged the trust of China by the Southeast Asian countries. For example, Vietnam still bears the scars of the 1982 border war and the 1988 battle for the Spratly Islands. The various claimants to the Spratly Islands were also dismayed by China's use of force on Mischief Reef and the building of forward naval facilities on the islands and rock outcrops, despite China's repeated reassurance that military force would not be used to settle the dispute. China's 1992 declaration in the National People Congress that the South China Sea was China's internal waters continues to worry the Southeast Asian countries, who view China as merely bidding time for the build-up of its military capabilities to enforce the claim.

The other sensitivity that needs to be reconciled by the Southeast Asian countries is the issue of Chinese minorities in the respective countries. The minority Chinese has dominated businesses and the economies of Thailand, the Philippines,

²¹ On the other hand, Jiang Zemin's need to cultivate the support of the PLA may require him to balance control of the PLA with the efforts to "contain" the influence of the PLA.

Malaysia and Indonesia. The resulting uneven distribution of economic resources has at times increase social tension within these societies. A certain resentment towards the Chinese role has always been present and the governments of these Southeast Asian countries has always tried to ensure that such tensions do not breakout into full-scale social unrest. For example, Malaysia has overt policies to ensure the predominance of the indigenous Malays in social, political and economic realms. The ruling Malay-dominated national alliance (UMNO) has continued to be wary of ethnic Chinese influence in the country's economy. Recently, Indonesia has also seen large scale riots in Medan and Aceh in June 1996, and Feb 1998, against the perceived dominance of the Chinese (although the Chinese were seen as the target for venting other frustration against "social unjust"). Likewise the prime target, of the populace frustration with social problems brought by the 1997 / 98 Asian Currency Crisis, was again the Chinese minority in Indonesia. In the case of the Philippines, the target of kidnappings for ransom is again the ethnic Chinese who are perceived to control a disproportional amount of the country's wealth. On the other hand, the Thais of Chinese descend have been able to better integrate with the rest of the society. On the other hand, Singapore being the only country in the region with a Chinese majority has been careful to not upset her neighbors by her ties with China. Singapore was the last of the ASEAN countries to formally establish ties with China after the rest of ASEAN countries have done so. These problems that the SEA countries experienced with their Chinese populations led to an uneasy relationship between the Southeast Asian countries and China and would complicate any Chinese leadership in the region.

In addition, many of the Southeast Asian countries also bore memories of China's previous support of the communist insurgents in the Southeast Asian countries like Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. While ideology may have taken a backseat in

China's more recent pragmatic dealings with the SEA countries, the SEA countries could never be sure that China no longer harbor intentions to influence their domestic situations through overt and covert actions in the future.

From the perspective of the United States, it would also be unlikely that it would be comfortable with a Southeast Asian grouping led by China that could obstruct its passage through the region. The implications of such a scenario being that the United States may lose or damage its power-projection capabilities from the Pacific and North Asia to influence the situation in the Middle East and Indian Ocean. This would effectively cut the U.S. worldwide deployment of forces into two. To overcome such a problem, the amount of forward-deployed forces would have to be increased significantly -- a most undesirable scenario in a time of budgetary constraints and force reductions.

In the case of Japan, such dominance of China in Southeast Asia would also be unacceptable. Such dominance has the potential to strangulate Japan economically by controlling its access to energy and other natural resources. This will effectively cause Tokyo to be subjected to the whims and fancies of Beijing.

Another issue of any Chinese leadership is that of its political structure. While China is for all intents and purposes not a *communist* country *per se* anymore, it has not officially jettisoned its communist ideology. This will continue to constrain its ability to play a leadership role in non-communist Southeast Asia. Unless, China is able to reform its political system and transform itself into an open society, it is unlikely that the Southeast Asian countries would be able to accept its leadership.

From the above, it can be seen that China's leadership role in Southeast Asia in the next five to ten years would be most unlikely to be welcomed wholeheartedly by the Southeast Asian countries, the United States and Japan. In addition, China's ability to provide this leadership is suspect, notwithstanding its desire to do so. China has also

always maintained that historically, it has not been an imperialist power, nor has it desired to play any hegemonic military role in the region (or anywhere else for that matter). But China's desire to play a leading role in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) points to the possibility of other aspirations.

Japan

The last external candidate with the potential of providing the necessary leadership for a common Southeast Asian security regime in the next ten years is Japan. However, like China and the United States, Japan also has inherent problems to overcome before it could play such a role.

Japan's interest in having a stable Southeast Asia is similar to that of China, namely a markets for goods, a source for investments, and freedom of passage through the vital SLOCs. Perhaps more than China, the Southeast Asian SLOCs are much more important to Japan that has limited resources at its disposal. Seventy-five percent of all Japanese energy consumption comes through the Southeast Asian SLOCs. Any disruption of passage through the vital sea-lanes will severely affect the Japanese economy with repercussions for the rest of the world economy. As the European and American markets matured, the emerging Southeast Asian markets will continue to attract the bulk of Japanese investments and provide a growing market for Japanese products. As such, Japan has much interest in maintaining the stability of the region and the freedom of access to or through the region.

While the Japanese military has the technology and capability to transform its navy into a blue-water fleet in the next ten years, its role in the region has been hampered by interpretations of the Japanese constitution which limits the military's role to self-defense. It is also unclear if the Japanese would be able to overcome the "clutch

mentality" of living under the U.S. security umbrella, for it to take on a greater regional security role. Japan, like the United States also faces the problem of domestic pressure to not deploy forces overseas. The 1993 deaths of two Japanese nationals in Cambodia (associated with the PKO efforts) led to a clamor by the Japanese public to recall its troops home and renewed the debate over a Japanese military role in international security. For the foreseeable future, the Japanese political system would continue to wrangle between the pacifist and isolationist tendencies, and the call for enlarged responsibility that would be commensurate with its economic might. It is expected to continue its two steps forward and one step back framework.

The other point of consideration is that Japan would also not risk its relations with China by portraying any attempt to contain China through strategic encirclement. On the other hand, a strong SEA could also potentially help in Japanese efforts to contain a hostile China if that comes about. Ultimately, Japan must decide how it should deal with a strong China before it could decide how it should deal with Southeast Asia. Japan would also want to avoid any competition with the United States in influencing the SEA security picture. As long as the United States continues her policy of engagement towards SEA, Japan could be expected to be take a backseat in this realm.

Yet another constraint in Japan's efforts to play a more pro-active role is her demographics. The average age of the Japanese continues to rise over the years, with increasing concerns if the younger generation is able to reproduce themselves sufficiently to replace the aging population. History has demonstrated that such shifts in the demographics have tended to reduce the willingness of the country to take a pro-active foreign and military posture. Japan will also be increasingly be burdened by the aging population and find it difficult to devote the necessary resources for a more active foreign and military policies posture.

On the other hand, we must take note of the fact that as time passes, Japan can be expected to take on a slightly different security outlook from the U.S. For example, in recent times, Japan's policies towards China, Myanmar and Vietnam are already starting to show signs of greater "independence" from the U.S.²² As such, the long term potential of Japan playing a greater role in the regional security cannot be ruled out. The fact that must also not be overlooked is that Japan can certainly attain a degree of military sufficiency to defend its security interests in the Southeast Asian region very quickly if it chooses to do so anytime in the future.

From the perspective of the Southeast Asian countries, an enlargement of the Japanese security role is also a divisive point. Almost all Southeast Asian countries still bear memories of the Japanese World War II atrocities and the proposed Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. The fact that the Japanese have not publicly acknowledged their guilt continues to be a stumbling block in relations with the Southeast Asian countries. The Southeast Asian countries fear that once Japan rebuilds its military might, it might get out of control as it did during World War II. Singapore's ex-Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew characterized this as the equivalent of giving liqueur cookies to an alcoholic. However, Malaysian's PM Mohammed Mahathir has shown greater openness to an enlarged Japanese role in Southeast Asia.

There are sentiments that an enlarged Japanese security role could be beneficial from two perspectives. The first is that the sharing of the security burden with the United States would help to prolong the U.S. security umbrella in the region. This would help to ameliorate the perception by the U.S. public that the Asian countries are free-riding on the U.S. security umbrella. The second strategic reason is that the Southeast East

²² On Japan's growing independence in foreign policy alignment, see for example Kusuma Snitwongse "Securing ASEAN's Future: An Overview of Security in Southeast Asia," *Harvard International Review* (Spring 1994): 8-11, 60.

Asian countries see Japan as a possible counterweight against a resurgent China. From this perspective, it would also be in Japan's interest to have Southeast Asia aligned with itself against a possibly hostile China.

Japan is unlikely to play a substantive military security role in Southeast Asia until she is able to reform or re-interpret its Constitution (especially with regards to Article 9 which restrict the role of the SDF to purely domestic defense), and overcome the domestic wrangling over its security role. This will have to be within the larger context of its military role in the world. For the next five to ten years, it is expected that Japan will continue to place priority on its domestic situation before taking a less isolationist perspective. Hopefully, time will also erode the memories of World War II and allow the next generation of Southeast Asian leaders to deal with Japan without the emotional baggage of the past.

Regional Countries

From the above, it can be seen that within the next five to ten years, it is unlikely that an external party will emerge to take on the leadership role for a common Southeast Asian security. These external powers examined either do not have the will, the resources or being acceptable to the Southeast Asian countries. As such, any common security regime is likely to either depend on collective action by the Southeast Asian countries, or the emergence of a leader within ASEAN.

The latter option is quite unlikely as the Southeast Asian countries are in a peculiar situation where no one by itself has the clout or the resources to command the followership of the rest. The historical animosity discussed in the earlier chapter would also point to the preference by most countries not to have a regional hegemon emerge. While Indonesia is the obvious choice by virtue of its size, its internal economic, political

and social challenges would constrain any such a possibility. On the other hand, Malaysia has been active in recent years trying to provide the leadership. However, its assertive leadership style has not gone down well with Thailand, Singapore, Brunei, or Indonesia.²³ Thailand has also traditionally avoided such a role. The implications is that Southeast Asian countries will have to adopt a slower process of consensus building regime, in order to develop any common security regime.

Common Threat Perception

The second most often cited reason for the longevity of the NATO-style common security model was the existence of a common threat in the former Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries. Arguably, the implosion of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries removed the *raison d'être* for the continued existence of NATO and now NATO is undergoing the soul-searching process to find an alternate purpose for itself and redefine its role(s). This thesis now examines if Southeast Asia has any such *raison d'être* to build-up a common security regime within the next five to ten years.

The experience of the 1979 Vietnamese invasion and occupation of Cambodia would caution against the proposition of a single threat being able to galvanize the Southeast Asian countries together. The Vietnamese Invasion of Cambodia arguably did propel the ASEAN countries toward some collective actions, especially in the diplomatic arena to deny the legitimacy to the Vietnamese-backed regime.²⁴ Beyond

²³ None of the countries desire a Malaysian leadership role for different reasons. In the case of Indonesia, the sensitivities are against Malaysia usurping its "big brother" role. Brunei, Singapore and Thailand are sensitive towards Malaysia's assertiveness given their respective bilateral territorial and political issues.

²⁴ See Amitav Acharya's "The Association of Southeast Asian Nations" Security Community or Defense Community?" *Pacific Affairs* (Fall 1991): 159-178 on a historical example where the call for common action did not work even with a clear and distinct Vietnam threat.

that, little was achieved in the military security realm. During the course of the conflict, Thailand called for joint exercises and military action against Vietnam, should Vietnam violate Thai territory. However, not much tangible action was accomplished and the idea of a common approach to a very real military threat was stillborn. The reasons for this state of affairs were many. None of the SEA countries within ASEAN could provide strong enough leadership, like the U.S. for NATO, that could galvanize everyone together. It could also be that the threat was not sufficiently serious as perceived by the Southeast Asian countries to warrant consideration for collective actions. But an often quoted reason for the failure for collective action was paradoxically the fear that a collective military security regime would antagonize Vietnam and propel Vietnam to take more aggressive actions or become more intransigent. While these reasons may be valid, one suspects that the real reason could be the lack of trust in each other intentions and capabilities.

China Threat Theory

If there is any strong reason that would propel the Southeast Asian countries toward a collective or common security regime, it is the threat of a hostile China in the next five to ten years.²⁵ But unfortunately, the Southeast Asian countries have divergent views on China's role in the coming years. It is true that China's record of use of military force to settle disputes and forward deployments in the South China Sea worry the Southeast Asian countries. However, there is no consensus among the countries on future Chinese military intent.

²⁵ See for example Dana Dillon's article "Contemporary Security Challenges in Southeast Asian" in *Parameters* (Spring 1997): 119-133, which discussed the potential of a hostile China being the catalyst for closer ASEAN security cooperation.

The pessimists would quote history to justify the claim that China has always seen Southeast Asia as within its ambit of influence. The Chinese concept of security over the centuries has focused on China being at the center of the world with the rest of her neighboring countries being subservient to its needs. China has over the previous centuries never regard Southeast Asia as an equal and there is no basis to believe that this will change once China regains her economic and political vibrancy.²⁶ This hierarchical mentality could be expected to manifest itself once again when China regains its economic and political might. As such, the pessimists believe that China is unlikely to want to work with Southeast Asia toward any common security regime. It could even actively desire the Southeast Asian countries to stay fragmented. China's preference to deal bilaterally with the Southeast Asian countries seems to support this divide-and-rule theory. The pessimists also point to the fact that the Chinese military capabilities being developed on Hanggi Island in Myanmar (Burma) as having offensive capabilities; the airstrip on Woody Island (part of the Paracel Island chain) that can accommodate SU-27 fighters, China's attempt to build a blue water naval fleet;²⁷ and China's repeated failure to honor its words not to use force, all point toward a China that can not be trusted. The countries that would be most wary of China's intentions include the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia.

Denny Roy (1994)²⁸ has noted the inadequacies of the argument that economic interdependence will be a constraint to China's aggression and use of force. Economic

²⁶ See for example, Ross Marlay's discussion in "China, the Philippines and the Spratlys Islands," *Asian Affairs*, 23, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 195-211.

²⁷ See for example Steven Ryan's discussion in "The PLA Navy's Search for a Blue Water Capability," *Asian Defence Journal* (May 1994): 28-32.

²⁸ Denny Roy, "Hegemon on the Horizon? China's Threat to East Asian Security," *International Security* (Summer 1994): 149-168.

interdependence itself can be a source of friction as the countries become closer intertwined economically. For example, the looming energy shortage to fuel China's economic growth can increase its assertiveness to the rights to South China Sea's potential resources. In addition, China's priority for stability and difference in the perception of time may cause her to sacrifice short term economic development for what she perceived to be necessary acts to ensure her long term security.

On the side of the optimists, they would point towards a *new* China that has recently been willing to engage the rest of the world positively. The growth of China's military capabilities is seen as being commensurate with its economic development. While China's military expenditure has continued to rise in recent years, the increase has been slower than its GDP growth. The fact that China has realized its economic backwardness meant that China would continue to focus its efforts on developing its economy in the foreseeable future. China would also be careful not to over-extend itself with too many fronts to watch, especially given its need to maintain internal stability. The optimists will also point to the fact that despite China's huge military arsenal, much of it is tied down by other regional conflicts and it has very insufficient power projection capabilities to challenge Southeast Asia in the near term.²⁹ The Southeast Asia is on the strategic defensive and can take a "poison shrimp" strategy to defeat any China aggression. As such, China can be sufficiently deterred from trying the military option. All these point toward a China that would be more likely to want to live in peace with its neighbors. Moreover, the Southeast Asian countries are key supporters and investors in China's economic reforms.

²⁹ See for example Michael Gallagher's discussion in "China's illusory threat to the South China Sea," *International Security* (Summer 1994): 169-194.

While both groups may differ on the long term intentions of China, they do find common ground in that China is unlikely to emerge as a substantive threat within the next five to ten years because of its domestic constraints. However, there is the wild card that should things go seriously wrong with the domestic situation, the PLA who has recently taken a backseat in the running of the country, may be forced to take a more direct role in the politics of the PRC. This could increase the chance of a more assertive China, especially in the military realm. It has been said that during the Taiwan Straits Crisis in 1996, the more offensive stance advocated by the hard-line military would have been realized if not for the control exerted by the civilian authorities. This highlighted the fact that the domestic stability (particularly the Taiwan sovereignty issue) of China is going to affect the balance of power between the moderate and hard-line groups within the Chinese leadership. This would then impact on the rest of Southeast Asia's relations with China. Therefore a stable China is the best bet for Southeast Asia.

Many writers have also questioned the possibility of the Southeast Asian countries ever being able to pose a sufficient challenge to China. The fact that the combined Southeast Asian defense expenditure is even less than that of Taiwan is certainly be food for thought, notwithstanding the "leakage" in the expenditure of the SEA countries. Therefore, even with a common security structure in Southeast Asia, there may still not be sufficient capability for Southeast Asia to counter a hostile China alone. On the other hand, the analysis of David Shambaugh (1994)³⁰ was probably more insightful. He argued that while the Southeast Asian countries may not have sufficient might to counter China, the aim was one of developing a "poison shrimp"

³⁰ David Shambaugh, "Growing Strong: China's Challenge to Asian Security," *Survival* (Summer 1994): 43-59.

strategy to deter China. It would also be arguably more prudent for the Southeast Asia countries not to be overly antagonistic in its dealings with China.

On the whole, there is widespread disagreement on China's potential as a threat to the region. Likewise, there is no agreement on the appropriate strategy to deal with China even if it proves to be a threat. Having said that, the possibility of the "China Threat" drawing the Southeast Asian countries together cannot be discounted in the long-term. There will be an even greater urgency towards some form of collective / common security arrangement if the "China Threat" is coupled with the "American Vacuum."

The Spratly Challenge

J. N. Mak and Hamzah (1996)³¹ have argued that after Cambodia, the Spratly Island issue would be the next *glue* that would bind the Southeast Asian countries together. As discussed earlier, it was also unclear if the Cambodian conflict was serious enough to bind the Southeast Asian countries together in the first place. The Spratly issue has also not attracted the same level of attention from all the Southeast Asian countries. Besides the claimants, the rest of the countries (Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia and Myanmar) have preferred to take a low-key approach to the whole problem. While all the countries realized the sensitivity of the issue as China is involved, each has tried to avoid any advocacy on the subject. For those who were not directly involved, they would rather the subject be kept at the back burner to avoid any complications. While there has been an increase in the Track II discussion by non-

³¹ Mak and Hamzah, "The External Maritime Dimensions of ASEAN Security," in *The Transformation of Security in the Asia-Pacific* edited by Desmond Ball, London: Frank Cass, 1996: 123-144.

official groupings on the subject, there has been a corresponding lack of open discussion by official channels.

Almost all the claimants of the Spratly Islands have made statements to the effect that everyone would refrain from the use of force to resolve the issue. But this has not precluded China from using force to enforce its claims to the Mischief Reef or has it stopped the other claimants, including Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines, from building up their presence on the chain of islands. Efforts by Indonesia to promote a forum to discuss joint development by all the claimants have also met with little success. While all the countries desire a peaceful resolution to the conflict, none seem able to take the initiative to resolve the problem. For those countries not involved in the conflicting claims, they would rather keep their relations with China on an even keel. For those countries that are claiming part or all the Spratly Islands, they have also been unable to unite the Southeast Asian countries together to seek a common solution.

Conclusions on Threat being the Driving Force

Although the Southeast Asian countries have a good opportunity to develop a common security framework in these years of relative peace, the disagreement over the threat would tend to increase the complacency and reduce the urgency towards any collective actions.³² The divergence of views on the security outlook has in turn created a sense of uncertainty in the region. Unfortunately, this has instead translated into the build-up of individual military capabilities to increase the comfort zone of individual countries (see Mak 1995). This paradoxically increases the uncertainties in the whole

³² See Dana Dillon "Contemporary Security Challenges in Southeast Asia" in *Parameters* (Spring 1997), on divergence of individual ASEAN member states' security priorities.

region and pushes the region into a virtue circle of arms build-up and ever increasing uncertainties.

That the SEA countries differ widely in their threat perception could also be seen from the differences in their defense expenditure structures. The Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Indonesian Armed Forces are still very much internally oriented to counter separatist movements or domestic instability. The budgetary constraints faced by these two armed forces also further constrain their ability to develop a more conventional force that can be integrated with the rest of the region. The Malaysian and Thai Armed forces, while arguably better equipped and trained, are also struggling to move away from the previous emphasis on counter-insurgency, toward a conventional focus. None of the regional armed forces have any power projection capabilities that can provide the embryo for the birth of coordinated regional actions to fully defend the SLOCs in the region.

Tim Huxley (1991³³, 1994³⁴) and Mark Rolls (1994)³⁵ have also pointed out that the orientation of some of the regional armed forces seem to be more directed at each other, rather than against any common enemy. For example, the historical distrust between Malaysia and Singapore would make it almost impossible for any joint action in the foreseeable future. Likewise for that between the Malaysia Armed Forces and the Thai Armed Forces, the Thai and Vietnamese Armed Forces, and the Philippines and Malaysian Armed Forces. Until such a time when the Southeast Asian countries could

³³ Tim Huxley, "Singapore and Malaysia: A Precarious Balance," *The Pacific Review*, 4, no. 3 (1991): 210.

³⁴ Tim Huxley, "The ASEAN States' Defence Policies: Influences and Outcomes," *Contemporary Security Policy*, 15, no. 2 (August 1994): 136-155.

³⁵ Mark Rolls, "Security Co-operation in Southeast Asia: An Evolving Process," *Contemporary Security Policy*, 15 no. 2 (August 1994): 65-79.

develop a sense of mutual trust and confidence in each other's intentions, it would be difficult to create any common security grouping.

While there may not be an obvious external military threat, the Southeast Asian countries do recognize the need for a collective security mechanism that embraces more than military security, in a time of rapid economic and social changes. The fact that transmigration brought about by uneven economic development, environmental management and racial issues can all disrupt the security of Southeast Asia, meant that there is a need for collective action of some sort in the future. It is with these in mind that the Southeast Asian countries have initiated the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in recent years to try to promote a common understanding of the threats facing the region and also provide a forum for confidence building.

The next conclusion that can be made from this section is that while the military threat may not provide the *raison d'être* for a common *military* security regime, other non-military factors are more likely to propel the Southeast Asian countries toward a common security regime involving other security aspects. This could then subsequently translate into a common security regime involving the military at a later stage.

The 1997/98 currency crisis has provided a silver lining in seeing unprecedented cooperation and consultation among the Southeast Asian countries to overcome the crisis together. This is a good example of the common consciousness that the economic security of their respective countries is closely tied to the social and political stability. These efforts to work together provided an opportunity for cooperation in economic security to bring the countries together for other aspects of security.

Relatively Similar Political Structures and Economic Development

The third reason that has been cited for the relative ease of formation of the NATO common security model had been the relatively similar political structures of the Western European countries. But the link between compatibility of political systems and a common security structure is often unclear. This section argues that relatively similar political structure and economic development is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for the development of a NATO-style common security regime.

The usual chain of argument given for the relative similar political and economic development helping to bring forth a NATO-style security model is that the outlook on various aspects of the comprehensive security framework would be more aligned. Hence, it would be easier for the various countries to come together for their common good. The priorities of the various countries would also be more aligned. This is definitely true for post-World War II Europe and the conflict between communist versus non-communist regimes were more distinct. Sharing the security effort would definitely allow resources to be better devoted to other areas of development, especially the rebuilding of the war-torn economy. It has also been argued that the similarities in political structures would promote the sharing of fundamental assumptions in their security outlook. Unfortunately, the Southeast Asian countries would not enjoy such clear distinction in ideology or political structures. Instead of having a black versus white scenario, the Southeast Asian situation tended to be colored by various shades of gray.

If the post-World War situation in Western Europe is examined closer, it is unclear if the similarities in political structure precede or follow the common security arrangement. There was not much of any political structure in the war torn countries of Europe. On the other hand, the institution of a common security structure has also promoted similarities in the political structures. The reconstruction of Europe was

military, political and economical in nature. Hence, the political structures may be an effect rather than a cause in the whole episode.

While the above reasons may be valid, it is unclear if they are necessary. It would be argued that more important than similarity in political structures, the legitimacy and ability to mobilize the national will is more important. First of all, while the Western European countries share largely similar political structures in democratically elected governments, the outlook of different political parties under different times was by no means similar. For example, when a left-wing party came to power, there would almost always be a shift towards a less confrontational stand against the former Soviet Union and former Warsaw Pact countries. Likewise, a conservative government was more likely to adopt a more strident approach and generally more supportive of a common security framework. Therefore, the swing in political mood could in fact have set back the working of a common security framework at times. Perhaps the more important glue was the commonly perceived threat and the dominant leadership of the United States in holding the grouping together. When the Cold War ended in the 1990s, the differences in security outlook among the European countries began to surface, despite the similarities in political structures and economic development.

The next counter-argument against overly stating the importance of political structure and economic development is that differences are only important if one member country directly challenges the legitimacy of another. If there could be an appreciation of the differences without the intention to challenge a different political system, then arguably differences would not matter as much. But in the case of NATO, the communist system was seen as a direct challenge as to the entire western system of values and society. As such, the two distinct political and ideological systems could not survive together. But in the case of Southeast Asia, the foreseeable future would see

the blurring of lines among different ideological and social systems. As such, it could be easier to maintain a live-and-let-live attitude, hoping that in the longer term economic development would lead to gradual harmonization of the different political cultures.

In Southeast Asia, there are a variety of political systems and diversity in the stage of economic development. These differences can paradoxically provide many opportunities for closer security cooperation. If all the countries accept each other as equals and that the circumstantial reasons to their differences, then the differences would instead become opportunities to share and learn from each other. The problem will only arise if one country challenges the legitimacy of another system because of differences.

What is required for collective action is not similarity in structures but stability in process. So long as the governments have the legitimacy to represent the interests of their own people and the country, and can take decisive actions, then the group will be able to move forward. The trick is to have sufficiently strong (i.e. legitimate from the point of view of national support) governments to lead the countries toward collective actions. This is the concept of not caring whether the cat is black or white, so long as it does the job (Quote from Deng Xiaoping). Over the last few years, the enlargement of ASEAN has proven that a pragmatic approach to embrace different political systems is indeed possible if the countries abide by the principle of mutual respect and non-interference in other's domestic affairs.

While differences in economic development can lead to differences in security outlook, the same differences also present opportunities for cooperation. For example, the basis for the promotion of the various "Growth Triangles" in Southeast Asia was based on cooperation to maximize the comparative advantage of different countries. The Singapore-Johor-Riau Growth Triangle is a good example. The differences in

resource endowment and human resource and infrastructure development enabled the three countries involved (Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia) to tap each other's strengths in their respective areas for a common goal. On the other hand, similarities in economic structures could also lead to more direct and intense competition, resulting in friction in inter-country relations.

On the whole, the differences in political and economic structures need not be a stumbling block in building a common security arrangement. This factor is at best neutral and depends on how the member countries seize the opportunities available under different circumstances. The recent experience by the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the Partnership for Peace Program in Europe further point to the possibility of different political systems working together for a common good. Failures to work together tended to be as much the result weak states failing to represent the interests of its constituents and to take decisive actions. This would be very much the Southeast Asian experience in time to come.

Strong and Legitimate Government

The above section highlighted that the more important reason for the ability of different countries to come together for collective action depends much more on the ability of the government to mobilize support for adoption of a long term perspective to policy matters. This is an area where the Western European countries have been much more successful. It is also the area where many Southeast Asian countries need to overcome before any meaningful cooperative security regime can be discussed.

In revisiting the chart in chapter three on the security priorities of the respective Southeast Asian governments, the reader would find the recurring theme of regime legitimacy and stability as an issue in eight of the ten countries (except Singapore and

Malaysia). We can broadly divide the rest of the eight countries into three different sub-groups, each with their own problems which restrict the ability of the government to take a longer term perspective on policy issues.

The first group comprises the budding democracies in Thailand and the Philippines. While both have some form of institutionalized democratic system to elect their governments, the tenure of these governments had tended to be shaky and subjected to populist pressures. This created the necessity of the elected government to place relatively more emphasis on its survival than long term security matters. For example, while the Philippines would be most keen to develop a common security regime to counter the China threat to its sovereignty and claims to the Spratly Islands, it is also the most unable to mobilize the others for long term actions to resolve the issues. Its strategic interests have also had to compete with the domestic pressures to reform the economy and provide for a more equitable social distribution of material wealth. In the case of Thailand, the frequent change of government and the tendency to have coalition governments have also undermined the stability it required to take a longer term perspective on strategic issues. In the process, such issues have been left to the more stable military, which has limited ability to resolve these issues.

The next group comprises Indonesia and Brunei. This group is characterized by the long term succession issue. At this point in time, the primary focus of Indonesian politics is to ensure a smooth transition into the post-Suharto era. Until then, Indonesia can be expected to be more internally focused than having any interest in a common security regime for the long term. While Brunei is relatively more stable because of its enlightened monarchy, it also has to worry about the longer term issue of succession and the continued acceptability of the monarchy to the more informed population. Given its more limited resources and diplomatic clout, Brunei is not expected to take a leading

role in the development of a common security regime. But it can be expected to support such an initiative, if one comes along the way. This is especially so if the common security regime lessens its anxiety over its larger neighbors' intentions.

The last group comprises the ex-communist/socialist regimes of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar. This is also the group that has the most internal problems to be able to effectively focus on a longer term common security regime. At this moment, this group would very much desire a common regime to lessen their individual defense and security burdens, so that they can concentrate on developing their economies. But the constant attention that is needed to be focused on their regime survival also meant that there is a smaller chance of any of them being able to focus on the longer term issue of a common security regime. Given that their focus is also much more internal, it is doubtful if they would expend much energy for the development of a common security regime.

From the discussion above, it could be easily seen that unless and until the Southeast Asian countries achieve a certain degree of national resilience individually, it would be difficult to achieve any common security collectively. Countries without strong and stable governments would be unlikely to be able to take effective long term actions.

However, the other aspect that needs to be addressed is the willingness of the governments to relinquish some freedom of action under a collective security arrangement. This continues to be a challenge even for the Europeans in NATO. But this requirement in the Southeast Asian context would be constrained by two factors. The first is that the mutual distrust among some countries would prevent any such collective agreement coming into effect. For example, until Singapore and Malaysia can perceive each other as not being a threat to the other, it would be difficult to foresee them coming together in a common security regime. A requirement for a collective

security system means a certain degree of openness and mutual sharing of sensitive security information. But countries concern with deterrence against larger neighbors would be hard pressed to balance such a deterrence requirement with the confidence building requirement.

The second reason is that a weak government has a tendency to not want to erode whatever little it may control, for fear of being portrayed as being weak. For example, the Philippines government and military would be most unwilling to acknowledge its weakness in its ability to defend its territorial interests. Likewise, it is unlikely that the Laotian, Cambodian, or Vietnamese governments would relinquish any of its freedom of action for an uncertain collective security in the short term. The fact that the Western European countries have been able to achieve a collective security regime also reflected their confidence in their own regimes. Joining a collective grouping was not perceived as a sign of weakness but rather a sign of strength.

Kelvin Holsti (1996)³⁶ has provided the relevant idea that the wars of the future are more likely to be fought by weak / failed states than strong states. This is particularly relevant to Southeast Asia where many countries are struggling to build-up the legitimacy of the state. Arguably, a confident and successful state would have less need to try to divert domestic attention from failure through hostile external actions. A good example was the 1965 *Confrontation* between Indonesia with Malaysia and Singapore. Then-President Sukarno of Indonesia needed a convenient diversion from Indonesia's social and economic woes. Indonesia embarked on a program to destabilize the newly formed Malaysia and Singapore states in order to divert attention from its domestic audience. This led to considerable tension in the region.

³⁶ Kelvin Holsti, *The State, War, and the State of War*. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press 1996.

Even in the 1990s, the possibility of such domestic weaknesses adversely affecting the regional security still exists. For example, one of the implicit reasons for Malaysia not being able to back down from its territorial claims with Singapore over Pedra Branca Island is the fact that such a move would be politically costly to the ruling UMNO party. In 1995, the relations between Singapore and the Philippines hit a new low because of the Flor Contemplacion incident (where a Filipino maid was convicted by the Singapore Courts for the murder of a child under her charge and another Filipino maid). The Filipino public was incensed by the perceived Filipino government's inability to defend its citizens' rights overseas. At about the same time, the Indonesian and Thai governments also faced pressure to "protect" the rights of their expatriate workers (mainly from the lower income groups) in Malaysia and Singapore respectively. All these governments felt the necessity to appease the public sentiment, although they all acknowledged privately that the incidents should not have any bearing on bilateral ties. Such incidences highlighted the problems which a domestic problem in a weak state could adversely affect the bilateral ties necessary for a constructive multilateral security regime.

As most of the Southeast Asian governments do not enjoy full "procedural legitimacy" as defined by Samuel Huntington (i.e. through an open election system similar to that practiced by the West), there is a corresponding need to booster their "performance legitimacy" through superior economic performance and social stability. As such, any actions that threaten the legitimacy of the Southeast Asian governments could only adversely affect the stability of the government concerned. The premium is placed on having strong and effective government to lead the nation. Therefore, any collective security agenda must also not be seen as threatening the legitimacy of the government. On the other hand, any action that reinforces the "performance legitimacy"

of the governments would tend to provide for a more stable environment. To achieve the stability required for collective actions, the legitimacy and strength of the government would most likely need to be strengthened through non-military means. Again, this point is the need to seek a common security solution through non-military means first. This is where the 1997/98 Asian currency crisis provided the silver lining, in that it has the positive effect of drawing the Southeast Asia countries closer together for their common economic security. This could then promote the trust and confidence in each other and subsequently lead to closer cooperation in other security realms, including the military security realm.

Another hypothesis is that as the Southeast Asian countries become more open and “democratic” in their form, this will enhance the ease of having multilateral security structures like that of the Western European nations. However, this hypothesis is also problematic. The first being that while it may be true that the Western European countries are by and large democratic in nature, the differences in their form of democracy must not be overlooked. Likewise, in the case of Southeast Asia, it is also not obvious if the “democratic countries” share the same political structures. In the next ten years, it can be expected that these budding democracies will each develop their own unique form of political structures. The second problem being the argument that democracies will tend not to go to war with each other and hence tends to promote regional stability. While democratic countries have certainly shown that it is more difficult to mobilize support for general war, the causal relationship is at best dubious. As such, it is difficult to say that enlarging the “democratic systems” or harmonizing the political systems of Southeast Asia will necessarily promote any form of common security structure. Strategic and political considerations will tend to dominate a nation’s calculus to engage in conflict than political affinity considerations. The polarization

during the Cold War between the communist bloc and the capitalist bloc had tended to hide various conflicts, which are not beginning to surface even among ideologically aligned countries. For example, while India and Pakistan may qualify as “democratic countries,” but this has never stopped them from waging war against one another. Neither has democracy stopped Israel from fighting Egypt. On the whole, there must be other more important strategic calculations than mere similarities or differences in political culture.

Relatively Similar Culture and Sense of Identity

Hedley Bull (1971)³⁷ had opined that the Europeans shared a sense of solidarity and cultural differentiation from others that helped them to form the common security alliance. Bilver Singh (1992)³⁸ also questioned if the Southeast Asian countries sufficiently shared a sense of common identity to propel them to come together for some form of collective action. While cultural similarity and sense of identity may be present in the NATO-alliance, it is again unclear if it's the cause or the effect of the whole issue.

The argument that the Europeans shared a sense of history that promoted a sense of identity which facilitated the development of a common security regime is also subjected to challenge. If we traced the many wars fought by the Europeans among themselves, it would be difficult to conclude if indeed there was a shared sense of history. If such a shared sense of history existed, it is also unclear if this serves to unite or divide. Certainly the French, German and British history has served to divide as much as it served to unite in the past. In the case of the Southeast Asian countries, a sense of

³⁷ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society*. London: Macmillian 1971.

³⁸ Bilver Singh, “Confidence Building, Security Measures and Security Regimes in Southeast Asia,” *Asian Defence Journal* (3/92): 5-17.

history could also be a stumbling block. Groups of countries like Vietnam-Thailand-Cambodia; Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore would at times be better off without the emotional baggage of the past when it comes to finding common ground to develop collective actions.

To argue that the Europeans shared cultural similarities would probably sound rather preposterous to most Europeans who are proud of their respective heritage. While the Southeast Asians exhibit a diversity of culture, race, and religious differences, these are arguably no more extensive than the diversity of the Europeans. As such, whether the cultural disparities of the Southeast Asians are indeed a stumbling block to collective action is subject to debate.

Even if we accept the argument that Southeast Asia is culturally more diverse than western Europe, it would still not be clear if this would be a stumbling block to collective action. Having relatively similar political outlook does not automatically translate into ease for collective action, unless the peculiar strategic interests of the respective countries have been considered. Likewise, having diverse cultural backgrounds also does not seem to prevent collective action. For example, while many African countries could arguably have rather similar cultural background, there has not been a correspondingly higher success rate for bilateral or multilateral cooperation. Neither have the culturally more similar Koreans, Chinese, and Japanese been any more successful in forging a collective security outlook. Ultimately, national interests would tend to matter more than culture.

While culture may not have mattered much, the sense of a unique identity could matter more. While it is true that countries that share a common identity could work together easier, it is not obvious if this is a cause or effect of the whole process. For example, was NATO a result of a “western European identity” or was the “western

European identity" a result of NATO? It has been argued by Herrmann (1995)³⁹ and Gardner (1994)⁴⁰ that the differences in cultures and colonial history left a legacy of division among the Southeast Asian countries. This lack of a sense of identity could hamper the drive toward collective action. While this may be true, it would be more valid to say that until recently, the Cambodian Conflict divided the countries in the region into two separate camps. The Cold War also compounded the problem by having the different countries aligned in different political camps. Hence, it would be more true to say that instead of culture being the dividing factor, ideology and politics are the real dividing factors.

If really the sense of identity was a causal factor, then the recent advocacy of the "Asian Way" of development would be an important factor in bringing about collective action in the region. Both Mahbubani (1995)⁴¹ and Leifer (1989)⁴² have commented on the rise of the alternative Asian voice in international politics. More recent authors have also commented that the ARF provides the Southeast Asian countries with a voice in international politics. Obviously the process of creating an identity is a chicken and egg problem. The fact that the ARF has achieved a voice for the Southeast Asian countries meant that it would in turn encourage a sense of identity among the Southeast Asian countries. This would consequently encourage them to contribute more actively to the process. A related point is that the more the Southeast Asian countries perceived themselves to be challenged by the "West" on various issues, the more likely they would

³⁹ William Hermann, "Conflict Potentials in Southeast Asia," *Military Technology*, 19, no. 8 (1995): 8-15.

⁴⁰ Lee Gardner, "Regional Resilience – The Imperative for Maritime Security Cooperation in Southeast Asia," *Naval War College Review*, 47, no. 2, Sequence 346 (Spring 94): 41-59.

⁴¹ Kishore Mahbubani, "The Pacific Impulse," *Survival*, 37, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 105-120.

⁴² Michael Leifer, "ASEAN and the Security of Southeast Asia," London: Routledge, 1989.

draw together and develop some form of identity by default. The recent rise of the intellectual challenge by the “Eastern or Asian Way” against the perceived dominant “Western Way” is precisely such a result.

While the Southeast Asian countries have only been recently able to identify themselves as a group, it would be equally wrong to argue that the differences in culture have not generated a common style in their approach to problems. Most commentators have remarked that a significant difference between the Western formalized approach and the Southeast Asian approach is the use of quiet diplomacy behind the scenes to negotiate deals⁴³. Open discussion of sensitive issues by Southeast Asian leaders are usually rare and tended to be more form than substance. This in itself is a particular form of cultural similarity. Another cultural trait among the Southeast Asian countries is the process of seeking consensus before action. While arguably this often leads to action by the lowest common denominator and slow progress on most issues, it is also a more definite guarantee for compliance with agreed actions.

The conclusions from this section highlight several key points. First, it is not clear how cultural similarities facilitate relative ease of cooperation. As such, the necessity and sufficiency of this factor is doubtful. The second conclusion is that if identity was more important, it was not clear if it was a cause or effect. Whichever the case, in recent years, the Southeast Asian countries have overcome previous divisions and have been moving toward establishing a common identity. Much of this could be attributed to the greater awareness that a collective voice is more likely to be heard and noticed in international forums. While the Southeast Asian countries may exhibit a

⁴³ See for example Steven Roop, *ASEAN Regional Forum: How ASEAN values and principles are shaping a regional security framework for the Pacific in the 21st Century*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College (1996), on the unique ASEAN values and principles that are shaping the new regional security framework.

greater racial, ethnic and religious diversity, it would be wrong to gloss over certain cultural similarities that have an impact on the countries' ability to cooperate and undertake collective actions, albeit different from the NATO model of majority decision making. Ball (1993)⁴⁴ has also noted that cultural factors will be less important than economics, technology and strategic developments in determining the form of any new security architecture.

Shared History of Institution Building

Related to the hypothesis that the Southeast Asian countries lack a sense of identity is the argument that the area lacks a history of institution building, especially multilateral institution building. It was said that the European countries had been coming together since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 to build multilateral institutions. These multilateral security arrangements included the balance of power system, the Concert of Europe, the Treaty of Versailles and many more. These pre-World War II multilateral institutions made it easier for a multilateral common security arrangement to be established in Europe post-1945. NATO was merely an extension or continuation of the previous practices. Likewise the establishment of the Warsaw Pact can also be seen in the context of a larger balance of power structure, relying on its history of multilateral institution building.

In the case of the Southeast Asian countries, the history of multilateral institution building has been relatively short for two main reasons. The first is that not until post-World War II did most Southeast Asian countries gain independence from the colonial powers. Prior to that, the security and foreign policies were dictated by the colonial

⁴⁴ Desmond Ball, "Strategic Culture in the Asia Pacific Region," *Security Studies* (Autumn 1993): 44-74.

powers. The second reason is that the colonial powers left behind a legacy of territorial boundary, racial, and other problems which plagued the inter-state relationships between the various Southeast Asian countries. This created a general sense of distrust among some countries. As discussed in the earlier chapter, almost all Southeast Asian countries have some form of bilateral disputes with one or more other countries.

The early attempts to form multilateral organizations for common security included the U.S. dominated Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) and the Malaysia-Philippines-Indonesia Organization (MALPHINDO). All these organizations failed for one of the three following reasons. The first was that organizations like SEATO were led by an external power (in this case, the United States) and was seen by others not in the organization as an attempt to perpetuate the dominance of external influence in the region. For SEATO, it was also seen as an overt attempt to contain the communist influences in the region and did not represent the real security interests of the members⁴⁵. The second reason for the failure of some of these organizations were their failure to fully represent all the member countries in Southeast Asia. As such, the Southeast Asian countries that were excluded saw that particular organization as threatening to its own interests. For example, Thailand's exclusion from MALPHINDO was seen by the Thais as a possible attempt to subvert its interests. Even today, the Five Power Defence Agreement (FPDA) which consists of the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Singapore is viewed negatively by Indonesia as the aim of the organization could be misperceived as being directed against Indonesia. The third reason for the failure of some of these early attempts was the failure to resolve the tensions under the surface between the

⁴⁵ In fact, SEATO contained so many non-Southeast Asian member countries that it would be difficult even to justify its existence as a Southeast Asian organization.

member countries. For example, the conflicting claim to the Sabah territories by both Malaysia and the Philippines led to the eventual break-up of MALPHINDO.

While the formation of ASEAN in 1967 represented a major step forward in the region's multilateral institution building process, it also had its limitations. ASEAN had always been careful to portray itself as a socio-economic organization, rather than a security organization. Although the regular dialogues and close interactions had definitely helped to build confidence and trust between the member countries, ASEAN had never wanted to acknowledge its security role until recently. One reason given for this reluctance has been that the formation of an overt security regime would tend to be exclusionary and could lead to misperceptions by non-members⁴⁶ as threatening to their interests. This was especially so during the Vietnam War and subsequent Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. The other politically sensitive issue was the perception of such an organization by China. Even in 1994, the then-Malaysian Defense Minister Najib was careful to play down the security role of ASEAN as he still saw it as being possibly provocative toward non-member countries (e.g. China).

The result of these past attempts has been a relatively slow pace of multilateral institution building and most inter-state relationships tended to be bilateral in nature. There were also good reasons why bilateral relationships had worked more effectively in the Southeast Asian context. The first reason was that most of the issues of concern tended to be more bilateral in nature. For example, these included issues like territorial disputes and economic cooperation. Resolving them bilaterally was much more efficient than discussing them at a multilateral forum. Such a bilateral forum also tended to avoid differences with other members. The other reason was that such bilateral discussions tended to be more exclusive which allows the countries involved to work behind the

⁴⁶ Similar to the situation during Vietnam's 1978 invasion of Cambodia.

scenes and not make their differences public (to the rest of the members). As such, observers have noted that the Southeast Asian negotiations tended to be done behind the scenes. Usually only the agreements were presented publicly. Public disagreement in an open forum seemed to be taboo in Southeast Asian inter-state relationships.

The point to note from the above is that while the Southeast Asian style of institution building and multilateral discussions may differ in style from the European system, it does not indicate an absence of such efforts. This is especially so within the last decade where countries have been increasingly more open towards each other. Although the processes seem to be characterized by informality and working behind the scene working, there exists a process nevertheless. Such a style of working is likely to continue into the new era of multilateral institution building process brought about by the formation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

The key challenge for the recently enlarged ASEAN in developing a closer security framework will be to set aside their historical distrust and relinquish the pursuit of complete freedom in the formulation of individual security policy, in order to gain the benefits of a collective security regime. This was the main challenge identified by Pollack (1993)⁴⁷ in the formation of any collective or common security framework. The fact that all the Southeast Asian countries agreed to adopt the 1967 ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation was a positive sign in the direction as they agreed to renounce the use of force to settle bilateral disputes and use dialogue and discussion instead. However, much more would need to be done before Southeast Asia (almost synonymous with ASEAN now, minus Cambodia) will be ready for a common security regime.

⁴⁷ Jonathan Pollack, "Security Dynamics between China and Southeast Asia: Problems and Potential Approaches," in *China and Southeast Asia – Into the 21st Century* edited by Richard Grant, Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1993.

Before leaving this section, it should also be noted that there are certain inherent strengths of a system of overlapping bilateral ties compared to a multilateral system. One of these is that it allows bilateral disputes to be settled much faster and efficiently by having only the relevant parties involved. Another advantage is that any disagreement need not impact on the larger organization and threaten the cohesion of the whole organization. Any disagreement between two member countries need not cause the rest of the members to take sides, resulting in the general paralysis of the organization. In these ways, the overlapping network of bilateral ties has helped to mitigate some of the weaknesses of the multilateral forums that existed thus far. The third advantage noted by Chan (1992)⁴⁸ is that the survivability of any organization depends on its ability to adapt quickly to changes in the strategic environment. As such, an informal and loosely organized structure like ASEAN actually has the advantage that it will be able to respond much faster than a formalized structure like NATO.

The recent experience of the enlarged ASEAN has also been indicative of the trend that the general agreements reached tended to be determined by the lowest common denominator as the emphasis on consensus meant that no one member was forced to adopt policies it did not desire. For example, the negotiations on the ASEAN Free Trade Area where tariffs were targeted for elimination in the long term resulted in some member countries moving much faster than others in liberalizing their economies. Looking at it from another perspective, the failure to reach general agreement just meant that the “general agreement” became a series of overlapping bilateral agreements. The recent experience of the European Union is again indicative of the challenges of multilateral agreements where agreements are made without general consensus. Until

⁴⁸ Steve Chan, “National Security in the Asia-Pacific: Linkages among growth, democracy and peace,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* (June 1992): 13-32.

and unless member countries accept the restrictions on their freedom of action in policy matters (as in NATO or EU), the system of accepting the lowest common denominator or having a series of overlapping bilateral agreements may work better. In the case of the Southeast Asian countries, the latter has been the preferred solution as the members have been unwilling to accept constraints their own freedom of action, at least up to this point.

As the economies of the region become more closely intertwined, it will also be a matter of time where the “freedom of action” in the economic security policy arena becomes increasingly difficult to achieve.⁴⁹ For example, in the 1997/98 Asian currency crisis, the ASEAN countries soon learn that they need to closely consult and even coordinate with each other to restore confidence in the market. Individually, each country will have limited ability to get out of the crisis. Neither can they adopt a “beggar-thy-neighbor” policy of pushing down their own currencies to increase exports without setting off a chain effect, resulting in a new round of competitive currency depreciation harming everyone in the process. This will lead to closer identification with each other’s security and will in the long term lead to possible closer security cooperation in the military area as well.

Conclusions

The key conclusions, using the NATO model as the “straw-man model,” are:

1. There is unlikely to be a dominant leader (either both external and internal to the region) that is able to provide the leadership necessary for a collective or common security framework in the near term. This can be attributed to either the (lack of)

⁴⁹ See Lyall Breckon’s *The Security Environment in Southeast Asia and Australia, 1995 – 2010*. (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses 1996) for an analysis of the growing interdependence and decreasing individual freedom of action.

willingness on the part of the party concerned or the lack of acceptability to the member countries. As such, the Southeast Asian countries must develop a model of collective cooperation without a dominant power.

2. There is no unified or common threat perception among the Southeast Asian countries. China is viewed with uncertainty rather than as a direct threat in the near term. While all members agree on the need to resolve the Spratly Island issue amiably without the use of force, there are substantial differences in priorities placed on the issue by the different Southeast Asian countries.

3. While similarities in political and economic structures may promote the formation of a common security framework, it is neither necessary nor sufficient by itself. It is also unclear if the similarities in political and economic structures are the cause or effect of the alignment of security outlooks.

4. The strength and legitimacy of the individual Southeast Asian countries' leadership will be a key element in determining the viability of any future security agreements. A weak state will be unable to take clear and consistent actions to promote regional security. It would either be distracted by domestic priorities or be tempted to divert attention from domestic problems through assertive actions overseas.

5. Unless and until each state has resolved its internal challenges (be it succession issue, or legitimacy of the government in the eyes of its people), it will be difficult for the different countries to focus on a collective / common security regime. Domestic legitimacy is a key concern in many Southeast Asian countries and must be taken into consideration in the development of any collective security regime.

6. While cultural diversity may add complexities to the process of forming a common security network, it is neither necessary nor sufficient as an obstacle to the process.

7. History can both be a positive and negative factor when it comes to building a multilateral security regime in Southeast Asia. The lack of a common identity until recently may not have helped to promote the process of building a common security regime. However, the historical distrust and problems created by history could be a major obstacle.

8. The Southeast Asian countries are still in the early stage of multilateral institution building and are comparable to the state of affairs in Europe in many centuries past. While the Southeast Asian countries could learn from the experience of the past, they would still need to develop their own system and adapt ways to suit their peculiar needs.

9. While multilateral institutions have their strengths, the strength and advantages of a system of overlapping bilateral ties, which can provide a certain degree of resilience, especially in the early stages of multilateral institution building, must not be overlooked.

10. Economics will dominate the cooperative agenda in the near term and as such economic security is placed higher on the agenda than military security. This also has the positive effect of developing the sense of cooperation and trust among the countries and could in the long term help promote a common security regime necessary for the region.

Elements of a NATO-style Common Defense System

Having discussed the fundamental outlook of the Southeast Asian countries toward a common security regime, the rest of this chapter examines the state of defense cooperation among the Southeast Asian countries in the next ten years. The current security priorities and outlook of the Southeast Asian countries would be used to project

the likely state of affairs in the time period under consideration. The main themes examined are common training standards, common / coordinated acquisition, and the possibility of a common response to any security challenges.

Common Training Standards

At the present moment, the armed forces of Southeast Asia are characterized by their great diversity in background, training doctrine and equipping. The following chart highlights some of these challenges when attempts are made to integrate any training and acquisitions.

Table 3: Southeast Asia Militaries' Tradition, Doctrine and Equipping

Country	Military Tradition	Source(s) of Influence on Operational Doctrine	Major Sources of Equipping
Brunei	British	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Largely British with some American influence. Focus on conventional operations and jungle warfare. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mainly British and American.
Cambodia	French and Chinese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remnants of French influence but predominantly Chinese guerilla warfare. Focus primarily on low level operations in tropical jungle environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chinese with remnants of Russian equipping. The various factions in Cambodia do not really have any uniform standard.
Indonesia	Indigenous ⁵⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counter-insurgency and domestic stability oriented. But its strategic divisions (KOSTRAD Forces) are slowly moving towards conventional operations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed. Inclusive of American, Chinese, German, British and other equipment.
Laos	French, Chinese and Vietnamese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remnants of French influence but predominantly Chinese guerilla warfare. Focus primarily on low level operations in tropical jungle environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chinese and remnants of French equipping.

⁵⁰ The Dutch had actually left very little influence on the military structure on the Indonesian Armed Forces, who have always pride themselves of their indigenously developed tradition of combining the military and social defense roles known as *dwi-fungsi* (dual functions).

Table 3(Cont'd): Southeast Asia Militaries' Tradition, Doctrine and Equipping

Country	Military Tradition	Source(s) of Influence on Operational Doctrine	Major Sources of Equipping
Malaysia	British	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British, Australian and American doctrine used. Moving away from Counter-insurgency operations towards conventional operations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed. Include American, British and even Russian.⁵¹
Myanmar (Burma)	British and increasingly Chinese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chinese doctrine adapted for its own operational requirements. Focus on domestic stability and counter-insurgency, especially against the minorities' separatist movements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mainly Chinese equipment.
Philippines	American	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Largely American doctrine. Focus on domestic stability and counter-insurgency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Largely American but increasingly more eclectic given tight budget.
Singapore	British	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eclectic with predominant American influence and adapted for her own operational requirements. Conventional force structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed. Inclusive of indigenous development.
Thailand	Indigenous with American influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Largely American doctrine adapted for own operational circumstances. Focus on conventional operations and counter-insurgency operations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Largely American but includes Chinese as well.
Vietnam	Indigenous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chinese doctrine with indigenous flavor. Focus has been on low level warfare. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chinese, Russian.

From the brief overview of the Southeast Asian armed forces above, it can be seen that integrating them together would be a challenge that is unlikely to be accomplished within the next ten years. Differences in language, training resources, operational doctrine, and other unique factors all combined to make it an almost impossible task.⁵²

⁵¹ Its recent acquisition of American F-16, Russian MiG-29 and British Hawk aircraft is a good example.

⁵² See J.N. Mak's "Armed, but Ready? ASEAN Conventional Warfare Capabilities," *Harvard International Review* (Spring 1994): 20-24 for an understanding of the inadequacies of the ASEAN armed forces despite the recent hardware acquisitions.

Instead, the alternative scenario of slowly having more bilateral training to promote mutual understanding may be the intermediate way ahead. In addition, the more realistic possibility would be to have the countries with the more conventionally oriented armed forces form the core and slowly bring in the rest. Given that the most are trying to move toward a more conventional force structure, there could be much sharing of lessons and ideas. But this is contingent on there being sufficient trust and confidence in each other. At the same time, the budgetary constraints and defense priorities of countries like Cambodia, Myanmar (Burma) and Laos will pose the question if such an arrangement will be beneficial to them.

From the bilateral exercises that have been conducted thus far among the armed forces of Southeast Asia, the focus has tended to be more confidence building and enhancing interoperability and interaction, rather than on any significant operational matters. This in part reflected the maturing relationship among the different armed forces and also the need for great sensitivity when two armed forces come together. Given the cultural traits of Southeast Asia, the form of the exercise was as important as the substance of the exercise. Judgements must always be made to ensure that the pace of cooperation is mutually acceptable and comfortable to both parties. Showing up the inadequacies of another armed forces is definitely taboo. On the other hand, much value had been obtained through the military-to-military interactions to promote a sense of solidarity, trust and confidence.

Given the challenge of having bilateral exercises because of the differences in training doctrine, language, and cultural sensitivities, it is no wonder that there tends to be a conspicuous lack of multilateral training arrangements. For example, in the area of anti-piracy patrols, Malaysia-Singapore, Singapore-Indonesia, and Indonesia-Malaysia links exist, but it would be difficult to achieve coordinated Malaysia-Singapore-Indonesia

patrols unless the political will is there. Given the resource constraints of individual countries, it definitely make economic sense to try to achieve greater coordination.

In the foreseeable future, these differences in training doctrine, language, and cultural sensitivities can be expected to slow down any multilateral training activities. At this point, there is also no serious effort to harmonize or synchronize the training activities. We would expect at best a continued rise in the bilateral links until such a time where the "invisible hand" of the overlapping arrangements leads toward some form of synchronized effort.

Common / Coordinated Acquisition

Another area of cooperation proposed had been the acquisition of common equipment and even the sharing of resources in an ASEAN pool for contingencies. Such a proposal was made by the Indonesians in the 1970s and by the Thais more recently.⁵³ Jeshurun (1989)⁵⁴ also discussed the idea in his writing. In 1978, Gen Pangabean of Indonesia went so far as to propose the formation of a common arms factory and in 1982, Thai Gen Kerdpol also proposed the standardization of weapons systems through joint procurement. To understand why such proposals did not materialized, it is necessary to understand the defense outlook and defense acquisition process of the respective Southeast Asian countries⁵⁵. (For example, see Frank Jones

⁵³ Defense News Oct 23 1997 issue.

⁵⁴ Chandra Jeshurun, *Arms and Defence in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989.

⁵⁵ A detailed analysis of the acquisition process is beyond the scope of this paper. But the recent pattern of acquisitions pre-1997 will be interesting in revealing the different rationales used by different countries.

(1995)⁵⁶, Chandra Jeshurun (1989)⁵⁷, Desmond Ball (1993)⁵⁸ and Bilveer Singh (1993)⁵⁹ for a sampling of the different reasons that may drive acquisitions in different countries).

From a defense orientation viewpoint, we have seen that the priorities of the various armed forces in Southeast Asia are very much different from each other. As such, it would be difficult to coordinate any procurement beyond perhaps small arms. For example, Singapore, having the more modern armed forces, is unlikely to need the same type of weapons systems as the Indonesians who have been focusing on domestic stability. Likewise the ships that Malaysia may require for the defense of its EEZ and sea-lanes will again be different from that required by Indonesia in patrolling its vast archipelago.

Besides differences in operational requirements, more importantly none of the Southeast Asian countries want to be unnecessarily constrained by some multilateral forum when they are trying to rapidly establish their own conventional capabilities. Arguably, they would be better off with different modern armed forces than similarly equipped inefficient armed forces. Until each country is sufficiently confident and capable of its own capabilities, each is unlikely to be willing to give up this flexibility of action.

Yet another issue is the vestiges of distrust that continued to linger among the Southeast Asian countries. How can a country reconcile its need for deterrence with the

⁵⁶ Frank Jones, *Naval Trends in ASEAN: Is there an Arms Race?* Monterey CA: US Naval Postgraduate School 1995.

⁵⁷ Chandra Jeshurun, *Arms and Defence in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1989.

⁵⁸ Desmond Ball, "Arms and Affluence: Military Acquisitions in the Asia-Pacific Region," *International Security*, 18, no. 3 (Winter 1993/94): 78-112.

⁵⁹ Bilveer Singh, "ASEAN's Arms Procurements: Challenge of the Security Dilemma in the Post-Cold War Era," *Comparative Strategy* (April/June 1993): 199-223.

desire to build confidence through transparency? Until mutual trust exists and the member countries believe in the greater goal of common security, it is unlikely that such common acquisition will come about. Incidentally, there has not been much coordination even among the arms purchases of different countries. For example, while the Thai and Singapore Air Forces fly American fighters, the Malaysians have acquired British and Russian fighters, in addition to American jets. Even in the choice of small arms, the Singapore and Thai armies differ from the Indonesian and Malaysian armies. While Singapore has a well-developed defense industry, the Malaysians have not bought anything substantial from Singapore. It was only recently that the Indonesian and Thai armies acquired ammunition and small weapon systems from Singapore. Singapore's recent contract to refurbish some of Indonesia's aging M113 Armored Personnel Carriers (APC) in part also reflects the growing trust between the two armed forces.

This leads to perhaps the most fundamental difference of the acquisition process in the respective countries. While Singapore adopts a highly technocratic style of procurement by carefully analyzing the cost and benefits of each purchase, it seems to be the exception rather than the norm. Huxley (1994)⁶⁰ has highlighted the many different influences on the regional arms purchases. This included the factors of domestic pressures, prestige, and even the possibility of corruption, as influencing the arms purchase of the Southeast Asian countries. Certainly commentators would be hard pressed to find some consistency in the procurement for the Southeast Asian armed forces. For example, why did Malaysia acquire three different types of fighters (Russian MiG-29s, American F-18s and British Hawks) within a space of two years? Why did the Indonesian Navy acquire thirty-nine former East German ships through a "fire sale" while

⁶⁰ Tim Huxley, "The ASEAN States' Defence Policies: Influences and Outcomes," *Contemporary Security Policy* Vol. 15 no. 2 (August 1994): 136-155.

many in the Indonesian Navy continues to question voice their utility? Finally, how do we justify the Thai acquisition of a helicopter carrier?⁶¹ All these seemed most confusing to the external observer. While the internal dynamics of the Southeast Asian arms procurement processes continue to invite speculation from observers, it would not be too wrong to conclude that there are factors beyond operational concerns that continue to drive the various arms procurements.

Once we understand the complexities of such processes, it is obvious that unless such processes change, there is little possibility of the Southeast Asian countries coordinating their purchases. At best, we can only hope that they will chose more similar systems to enhance the inter-operability of the different armed forces. Trying to rework the internal dynamics of Southeast Asian arms purchases implies the need to reshape the internal political dynamics of the countries. This is most unlikely to be achievable in the next ten years.⁶²

Removing the Arms Race or "Interactive Acquisition?"

In recent years, some commentators have noted a seeming "interactive arms procurement process" among the Southeast Asian countries. Some term it as an arms race while others try to justify purchases as being brought about by enhanced economic development⁶³. Indeed there are many reasons for the rise in arms procurement by the

⁶¹ Arguably a helicopter carrier is a power projection capability which has may be required as a tool to secure the territorial waters. But what continues to baffle observers is the apparent lack of a complete package of ships and aircraft that is conventionally associated with the building of such a task force capability.

⁶² The Asian currency crisis has highlighted the severity of the problem associated with making financial decisions based on personal ties and prestige, rather than sole on the financial viability of the project. This is part of the wiser problem of moving towards a more open and transparent way of doing business.

⁶³ See Amitav Acharya's discussion in *An Arms Race in Post-Cold War Southeast Asia: Prospect for Control*, Singapore: ISEAS, 1994.

Southeast Asian countries. These included greater resource availability, emphasis on modernizing the armed forces toward a conventional role, enlarged responsibilities brought about by the need to defend their EEZ interests with the promulgation of the 1982 UNCLOS, uncertainty driven by a reduction in U.S. military presence, prestige (keeping up with the Jones), supply side pressures (from the reduction of sales to other parts of the world after the Cold War) by the major arms suppliers, pre-empting future restriction on sale of weapons, and so forth. Ball (1994)⁶⁴ provided a good discussion of the possible factors involved. It is unlikely that the recent arms purchases could be attributed to any single factor. On the positive side, Wattayanagam and Ball (1996)⁶⁵ have also noted that the increase in defense expenditure by the Southeast Asian countries had actually been slower than the growth of their GDP. As such, the proportion of resources devoted to defense has actually decreased.

While the acquisitions of more conventional weaponry have boosted the defense capabilities of the Southeast Asian armed forces, Dibb (1997)⁶⁶ provided a more insightful analysis on the overall marginal effects of these procurements because of the lack of internally and externally coordination. As such, there are still serious deficiencies in the capabilities of these armed forces. In addition, the marginal improvement in capability was often not commensurate with the resources expended. All these factors continue to complicate any effective security and military cooperation arrangement among the Southeast Asian countries. The more worrying trend is that if the process of

⁶⁴ Desmond Ball, "Arms and Affluence: Military Acquisitions in the Asia-Pacific Region," *International Security* Vol. 18 no 3 (Winter 1993/94): 78-112.

⁶⁵ Wattayanagam and Ball, "A Regional Arms Race?" in *The Transformation of Security in the Asia-Pacific* edited by Desmond Ball (1996): 145-174.

⁶⁶ Paul Dibb, "Defence Force Modernization in Asia: Towards 2000 and beyond," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* Vol. 18 no. 4 (March 1997): 347-360.

“interactive arms procurement” is indeed true, then it demonstrates that the vestige of lack of confidence and trust in each other’s intentions have yet to disappear. The danger is that while each state tries to improve its own military capabilities to enhance its own security, it paradoxically creates more uncertainty in and insecurity in the region. Mak (1995)⁶⁷ has made the useful distinction between an arms build-up that is “threat driven” and that which is “uncertainty driven.” In the case of ASEAN, it is more characterized by the latter and hence does not really constitute an arms race – which imply a degree of interactivity.

The 1997/1998 Asian currency crisis provides yet another counter to the “arms race” argument. With the onset of the economic crisis, countries like Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia immediately reduced their defense budgets. High profile acquisitions, like the F-18s for Thailand, were all put on hold. The priority was clearly economic first and military second. The next interesting point to watch for is whether the budgetary constraints will serve to foster closer military-to-military ties through pooling of resources and experience, or will the military-to-military interactions be curtailed by the budgetary constraints. Clearly the two are not mutually exclusive. It can be expected that bilateral training may be cut back to avoid further strain on the military budget. But at the same time, the ASEAN militaries may also be more acutely aware of the possibilities of sharing training facilities and expertise to try to achieve mutually beneficial cost savings. Example of such includes the sharing of pilot training facilities, coordination of maritime surveillance to enhance maritime safety and disaster relief. For example, Indonesia announced in February 1998 that the economic crisis has curtailed her ability (inclusive that of the military) to deal with the forest fires. This is an area where the ASEAN

⁶⁷ J. N. Mak, “The ASEAN Naval Build-up: Implications for Regional Order,” *The Pacific Review*, 8, no. 2 (1995): 304.

countries can pool their resources to help resource their common problems. It is widely expected that the financial crisis will draw ASEAN closer together and provide a new focus for the group. However, it is not clear at this point in time if this will also translate to the more sensitive defense sector.

Common Response

Given the lack of alignment in security outlook, priorities, operational doctrine, and inter-operability, it is most difficult to expect the Southeast Asian countries to make any coordinated response in the near term. The fact that even the Vietnam-Cambodian Conflict has drawn limited coordination should also warn against too much optimism in this area.

Instead of focusing on a Southeast Asian-wide response to a major contingency, what could realistically be achieved in the foreseeable future are bilateral or trilateral responses and coordination of more minor efforts. For example, this includes joint patrols of the SLOCs in the region, integrated air defenses and counter-drug operations. Cooperation in the area of air and naval units are also less sensitive for those countries that hold certain historical baggage against each other. The 1997 Indonesian-Malaysia forest fires was a good example of the Southeast Asian countries working together in a civil-military environment to establish the trust and confidence in each other. Such cooperation tends not to show up the disparities of the various armed forces which touches on the sensitivities of the other countries. These minor efforts could in the longer term lead to greater trust and confidence in each other to facilitate future cooperation.

Conclusion

From the operational and technical viewpoints, we can see that the armed forces of the Southeast Asian countries still have a long way to go before there can be any meaningful cooperation in the defense arena. The most likely outcome would be the continued enlargement of the semi-defense related areas to first build trust and confidence with each other before embarking on any common defense arrangements. Ultimately, such arrangements can only be brought about if the defense outlook and policies are harmonized at the higher political level. The respective armed forces, being an instrument of their countries' policies, could only continue to enlarge the technical aspects of cooperation in the meantime. The next chapter identifies the likely areas of cooperation that will most likely precede the establishment of a more extensive common security regime.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WAY AHEAD

The previous chapters have identified the main impediments to a NATO-style common security structure emerging in Southeast Asia and the ingredients necessary for an indigenous Southeast Asian security architecture. These impediments included the differences in defense priorities, operational doctrine, vestiges of mutual suspicions, focus on other priorities, and so forth. Hence, a more realistic scenario would be to ask how the Southeast Asian countries could foster greater comprehensive security cooperation for the stability of the region. At the same time, what role could the military play within the larger security and political perspectives?

Fostering Closer Security Cooperation

The first step in fostering closer security cooperation is to identify the main areas of common security concerns of the Southeast Asian countries. From the previous chapters, it can be seen that these common areas include economic cooperation, security outlook, defense orientation, and regime legitimacy. Each of these will be examined in turn to highlight their contribution toward closer security cooperation over the long term.

As discussed in chapter three, economic security is fundamental to the stability of most of the Southeast Asian regimes at this point of time. This is especially so for those countries that are deemed weaker in terms of “procedural legitimacy.” There is a need for the Southeast Asia countries to sustain their economic growth rates to ensure that their respective countries are able to maintain their stability as they transition toward a more open political system. Another reason is that there could be adverse side effects if

the economy stop growing. The flow of migrant labor and the racial tensions that could surface within the individual countries could rapidly affect the security of the rest. For example, the handling of the huge wave of illegal Indonesian migrant labor brought about by the 1997 / 98 Asian Currency Crisis, has stretched the sensitivity of Malaysia and Singapore to the limit. The clamor for economic opportunities was quickly translated into a "political" issue with the Acehnese illegal immigrants claiming political refugee status and igniting a round of Acehnese frustration with the central Indonesian government.

The integration and growing interdependence of the various economies will also be important to promote the overall stability of the region. When everyone sees the benefits of cooperation and the risks of conflict, then everyone will be less likely to threaten the economy and stability of another country. This is especially so when one country realizes that the instability of another neighboring country can have very rapid adverse implications on oneself as well. The SEA countries will want to avoid a repeat of the 1960s Confrontation where one country (Indonesia) tried to divert attention from its domestic problems by launching an attack on other countries (Singapore and Malaysia). Again, the 1997/98 Asian currency crisis provides a good example of the dangers to the regional social stability if the economic stability suffers a setback.

As it is unlikely that there will be sufficient mutual interest in a common economic area in the near term, the efforts should go toward promoting the bilateral / trilateral economic arrangements (like the "growth triangles") and a series of overlapping economic ties. This would provide the mesh of stability necessary for all in the region. Having each of the countries play a part in the development of another country would also contribute to the mutual confidence and trust among countries. This would go toward eradicating some of the distrust left by history. For example, during the October

1997 currency crisis, the fact that the Southeast Asian countries banded together to help each other to tide over the crisis added to the general sense of solidarity and trust. In the long term, this could only contribute positively to the overall security climate. The continued reduction of tariffs will also help to promote intra-ASEAN trade. This has the beneficial effect of reducing the ASEAN countries over-reliance on external markets for growth. Some commentators have attributed this to contributing to the rapid spread of the 1997 / 98 Asian Currency Crisis where all the currencies were adversely affected rapidly by a fall in the confidence of their ability to maintain their currency value. This will also allow the ASEAN countries to promote trade in their currencies (or a basket of regional currencies) to help mitigate against the vagaries of the international currency markets.

The next important mechanism is to promote the alignment of a common security outlook and to decrease the chances of misperceptions causing conflicts. In this area, the Southeast Asian countries need to build on the success of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). This forum has the potential of becoming the security forum for the Southeast Asian region and the equivalent of the Conference for Security and Cooperation of Europe. The fact that it had managed to get all parties (both internal and external to the region) who have an interest in the continued peace and stability of the region to come together to discuss security issues is itself an achievement. The many Track II (non-official) forums that are ongoing are also helpful in the sharing of views and security perspectives. These Track II conferences help to promote the alignment of security perspectives in the long term as many of these “non-official conferences” are being participated by “officials in private capacity”. This allows ideas to be discussed at a less structured forum without taking official positions, while common interests are

explored. This is also in consonance with the ASEAN-style of negotiations which calls for close consultations and consensus before adopting any formal agreements.¹

To promote greater transparency and build confidence with each other, the useful ideas that could be further explored include the establishment of a voluntary arms register, an agreement on a set of ground rules for conflict resolution (e.g. perhaps expanding on the ASEAN Treaty on Amity and Cooperation), and mutual consultation / informing of each other of significant military purchases / military activities.

However, caution must be exercised to avoid too high expectations. While these meetings have brought the parties together to talk and share views, they must produce some tangible results soon. Otherwise, interests may fade and participation decline as outputs fail to meet expectations. For example, the resolution of the South China Sea conflicting claims have been seen by many as a test case for the ARF process. The achievement of a diplomatic solution will be seen as milestone in the institutionalization of the ARF is the regional security forum.² But the failure to do so will also reveal the impotence of the ARF mechanism. Too many conferences will also only sap interest and lead to a diffusion of focus.³

To further enhance the confidence and trust, the Southeast Asian countries should continue to build-up cooperation in non-military and civil-military areas. These activities include sharing expertise in economic management, urban development, cultural programs and disaster relief. The establishment of a Southeast Asian disaster / contingency force is an idea that could prove to have high payoff towards a closer future

¹ See Pauline Kerr, "The Security Dialogue in the Asia Pacific," *The Pacific Review*, 7, no. 4 (1994): 397-410 on the merits of this system.

² See for example discussion in Chan Heng Chee's edited *The New Asia-Pacific Order: A Summary Report* Singapore: ISEAS, 1997.

security and military cooperation. Instead of having a rigid control headquarters, this should instead focus on joint training to enhance inter-operability and an agreement on standby forces and resources available for contingency operations like flood relief, earthquake and forest fires. This will allow the civil defense bodies and some military agencies (which in many Southeast Asian cases are one and the same agency, e.g. Indonesia) of the various Southeast Asia countries to work together. The Southeast Asian police forces have made nascent arrangements in this direction with the sharing of intelligence information to conduct counter-drug, anti-smuggling, and anti-piracy operations. These civil-military activities would in the long-term lead to more significant military cooperation.

In the area of political cooperation, the Southeast Asian countries should continue to abide by the principles of mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. This is a key to reassuring each other that there is no overt objective of subverting another country's system. This would avoid the tensions created by misperceptions that one country is attempting to subvert another's legitimacy by challenging the other's social and political systems. In this area, the Southeast Asia countries need to continue to develop a system to embrace differences in social system and political ideologies. So long as one country does not see another country as trying to impose its social structure or ideology, there would be greater mutual confidence and trust. Each must respect the differences in circumstances among countries which have led to the differences in political and social system. The fundamental principle must be that the people in the respective countries have a right to determine the system that they wish to live under and that they would take the necessary actions themselves to modify their conditions should they choose to do so.

³ See Paul Evan "Building Security: The Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia

As the Southeast Asia countries continue to strengthen the overlapping network of ties among themselves, they must also maintain their links with external parties to ensure that this closer security cooperation is not perceived negatively by the other external states as being targeted against them, notably China. For example, the efforts to enhance Southeast Asian cooperation should not undermine China's continued relations in the region. Nor should it give the impression that it would somehow exclude other interested parties like Japan and the United States from future security arrangements in the region. This is the importance of having an inclusive rather than exclusive approach in the development of a common security architecture.

Finally, the SEA countries must come to terms among themselves to accept the inevitability of member countries having bilateral defense treaties with external countries, and not let that be a stumbling block in their quest for closer ties. There needs to be acceptance of the fact that until and unless member countries' security can be safeguarded by an alternative comprehensive security framework, a series of overlapping bilateral security ties with external countries, may be the inevitable stepping stone in that direction. As such, there is no need for Indonesia to view the FPDA arrangement negatively. Nor does Malaysia need to feel suspicious toward Thailand's and Singapore's ties with the U.S.

Fostering Closer Military (and Civil-Military) Cooperation

In terms of military cooperation, the Southeast Asian countries should continue to build up the network of overlapping bilateral and multilateral ties. Given that the cooperation in air and naval forces is less sensitive (as the physical presence of ground forces in each other country is smaller), the Southeast Asia countries could use these

Pacific (CSCAP)," *The Pacific Review*, 7, no. 2 (1994): 125-139.

areas as stepping stones toward greater cooperation. For example, the extension of the bilateral anti-piracy patrols could be developed into a more comprehensive maritime patrol regime for the SLOCs in the region that would enhance the overall security of the region.

Similarly, the integration of the various countries' air defense systems for air surveillance could also be considered. However, there are two challenges that have to be overcome. The first is that the historical distrust between some member countries must be totally removed so that, the air defense systems are directed at external threats and not to be perceived to be directed against each other. This implies a certain degree of openness toward the sharing of sensitive information, which till date has not been achieved. An associated issue is the need to resolve a set of mutually agreed area allocation. (If the experience of the civil Flight Information Region is any guide, then it does not encourage much optimism in this area). The next problem is that a level of cooperation that is too close may cause China and other non-member countries to perceive that this is somehow directed against them. Incidentally, this could be a strong card for the Southeast Asian countries to play against China to signal any displeasure with its military stance, should China turns aggressive. The age-old problem that any cooperation of this nature would create an us-versus-them mentality still exists. Considerations also have to be made to integrate the ex-communist countries into this larger framework for this to work.

In the area of land exercises, where possible the Southeast Asian countries should try to open up their exercises to regional observers (who are not participating) to promote confidence and trust in each other. Even where observer status could not be possible, the Southeast Asian countries should try their best to keep each other informed to prevent any misunderstanding. This would reduce the suspicions that these exercises

were somehow targeted at another member country. The other significant advantage of doing so is that it could help to promote the harmonization of operation doctrine and procedures in the long term. Given that most Southeast Asian countries are making that transition toward more conventional force structures, much could be learned by sharing the lessons learned with each other. Similarly, the Southeast Asian countries could also promote visits to each other's bases and military installations to create a general sense of openness and trust. One of the mental obstacles that must be overcome is that such exercises must not be misperceived as opportunities where one country demonstrates its capabilities to another for deterrence measure. This was reportedly one of the anecdotal reasons as to why the Malaysian Armed Forces turned down Singapore's 1988 invitation to open up each other's facilities to the other party. The Malaysian Armed Force chief was rumored to have remarked that he didn't want the confidence of his troops to be adversely affected by confirming their worst suspicions on the disparities.

As Southeast Asian armed forces acquire more modern weaponry, there could also be other potential areas for cooperation. For example, the joint development of the Siabu Air Combat Maneuvering Range (ACMR) by Singapore and Indonesia to train their pilots and the use of common flight simulators are examples where it made good economic sense to have joint military training. This is especially important for the Southeast Asian armed forces that may face budgetary constraints, especially after the 1997-98 Asian currency crisis. These joint developments would also contribute to the overall sense of trust and confidence.

Another low cost area would be to enhance the level of interaction among the various armed forces and the mutual exchange of students to each other's military courses. These would also help to promote a sense of camaraderie and help to

harmonize the diverse operational doctrines and tactics in the long term. The increased interactions would also “force” the member countries to learn more of the others’ language and culture in order to facilitate cooperation. Without some form of common standards and common language, it would be difficult to envisage much closer cooperation between the SEA countries.

Given that each of the Southeast Asian armed forces individually has limited capability to contribute significantly to UN Peacekeeping efforts, the Southeast Asian countries could also look into the possibility of having a joint task force where member countries each contribute some forces or assets to complement the overall effort. The Malaysians have promoted the idea of a Peacekeeping Institution to train Southeast Asian Peacekeepers, and this idea could be further developed. The advantages of this idea again contribute to the overall sense of trust, confidence, identity, while promoting mutual understanding of each other’s working doctrine in the longer term. By pooling resources together to perform peacekeeping operations on the world stage, the Southeast Asia countries will also enhance their stature and voice in the international forums. This will have the potential of creating a positive circle of fostering greater identity among the countries, which in turn foster greater trust and confidence in each other.

Another area of potential low-cost cooperation area, which also promotes transparency, is the sharing of intelligence among member countries. This will serve to alleviate the concern that somehow a country continues to harbor ill will towards another. This has already been done in the civil-military areas of counter-drug, crime control, and anti-piracy measures. This could slowly be extended to other areas like joint mapping, sharing information on weapon capabilities (given that the ASEAN countries have such a diverse weapon arsenal!).

In the areas of maritime surveillance and maritime disaster relief, there are also much that can be achieved by fostering closer cooperation among ASEAN countries. Henry Kenny (1996)⁴ has noted that, for example, the threats to the Malacca Straits include not only hostile military actions, but rather more likely from natural disasters and human errors. Should, the Malacca Straits be forced to close due to oil spill or rampant piracy activities, there is much scope for the ASEAN countries to draw up a coordinated action plan to deal with such contingencies.

Other forms of interaction among the Armed Forces should be enhanced to establish a sense of identity and camaraderie. These could take the form of the already existing annual ASEAN Rifle Meet, or other skills-at-arms competitions like parachute jump competitions. These less substantial interactions will provide the basis for future region-wide interactions. These will serve to complement the concurrent development of bilateral ties in more substantial areas like multinational exercises.

There are indeed many areas of potential cooperation and where countries can work together to prevent problems. These have been highlighted in chapter three, table two. The SEA countries will need to work consciously and continuously towards realizing their joint potential.

Conclusions

From the above, a few generic rules for promoting closer security cooperation could be made. These include:

1. The area of cooperation for security would tend to be led by economic, political and social security, rather than military.

⁴ Henry Kenny, *An Analysis of Possible Threats to Shipping in key Southeast Asia Sea-Lanes*. Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, 1996.

2. The non-military and / or civil-military activities should be promoted with a view of building trust and confidence in each other. These activities could in the long term promote closer security cooperation, as these also tend to be the same military instruments.

3. An overlapping network of ties is more likely to characterize the security regime of Southeast Asia, rather than a single unified structure as per NATO.

4. Military cooperation forms but one part of this overlapping network which includes other non-military areas of cooperation.

5. Harmonization of military doctrines and working procedures can begin at the non-sensitive areas like low level technical exercises and peacekeeping operations.

6. Familiarity with each other culture and language needs to be promoted together in order to facilitate better understanding.

7. The range of cooperative military activities should be extended to establish a sense of identity and promote interactions. Admittedly, this will be difficult in the times of tight budgetary constraints due to the economic difficulties.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS

In the foreseeable future, the Southeast Asian countries are expected to continue their strong economic growth, despite the recent currency crisis. This will bring about much social and political changes. Associated with these would be the changing security relationships among the various Southeast Asian countries and with countries external to the region, especially China, Japan and the United States. As the Southeast Asian countries become more interdependent economically, the need to address their individual and collective security challenges together as a group will continue to grow.

This thesis sought to determine if a *common security regime*, akin to that of the NATO model will emerge in Southeast Asia in the future. Through the course of analysis, the aim was to draw out the fundamentals necessary for a collective security regime for the Southeast Asian countries. This is especially important when it was found that the NATO model will not be a suitable model for the foreseeable future. Instead, the Southeast Asian countries will need to develop an alternative collective security model based on the fundamentals identified.

To recapitulate, the main arguments for the NATO model not being suitable for Southeast Asia are:

1. There is a lack of alignment in the threat perception among the Southeast Asian countries that would promote their giving up of some individual flexibility in security policy, for a common security regime. Related to this lack of alignment is the fact that there are still vestiges of historical distrust between some countries that will continue to hinder closer security cooperation. Currently, neither the "China Threat" nor the Spratly Island issues are sufficiently powerful to unite the Southeast Asian countries together for

a common response. It is also uncertain that the Southeast Asian countries would want to do that to risk antagonizing China.

2. There is also unlikely to be a dominant power from the region, or external to the region, that has either the desire and/or the capability to provide the leadership role. As such, the Southeast Asian countries would need to develop their own collective leadership model parallel to any effort in promoting a common security regime. This is expected to take time given the nature of Southeast Asian politics and their relatively short experience in multilateral institution building.

3. While similarities in culture, political systems and economic development could help promote alignment of security outlook and security cooperation, this thesis has argued that they are neither necessary nor sufficient by themselves for a common security regime.

4. Currently, while Southeast Asian countries are rather good at building a network of bilateral ties, there has been less emphasis on the establishment of equivalent multilateral links. Part of the reason behind this is the focus on bilateral issues rather than on regional issues that require a regional solution. But the establishment of the ARF shows that there is increasing awareness in the need for a regional approach to security issues.

Having established that the NATO model may not be suitable for Southeast Asia, the thesis has also identified the characteristics necessary for a collective security regime. These characteristics include:

1. The need for collective economic and political security to develop in parallel with, if not precede, the development of collective military security. This is especially important in the promotion of trust and confidence with each other. There is a need to

promote greater transparency and openness toward each other's military capabilities and security outlook, prior to the closer military cooperation.

2. The collective security of the region can only be ensured through the individual resilience of the countries. This means that without strong and cohesive governments that enjoy strong domestic legitimacy and support, it would be rather difficult to envisage the Southeast Asian countries being able to come together to focus on long term collective security. Mutual respect and non-interference in other affairs are important in this context.

3. The diverse security interests of the Southeast Asian countries point to the continued need for an overlapping network of security ties, rather than a unified system of common security. This may or may not eventually develop toward a common security regime. There are inherent strengths in such a system for Southeast Asia vis-à-vis a common security regime.

4. The identity of a Southeast Asian community will continue to grow as the various countries undertake the collective leadership task to spearhead the ARF development. At the same time, the increasing intellectual challenge to provide an alternative to the "western model of social system" will also serve to bind the Southeast Asian countries together.

5. The Southeast Asian countries could continue to develop the semi-official, non-military and semi-military areas of cooperation in order to build up the overarching culture of cooperative development. This would in the long term help to promote closer security and military links.

6. The Southeast Asian countries have been and will continue to be careful not to engender a perceived us-versus-them mentality (vis-à-vis non-member countries external to the grouping) as they continue to seek closer security cooperation.

Conclusion

In the foreseeable future, a common security model (especially in the military realm) is unlikely to emerge in Southeast Asia. Instead, the Southeast Asian countries will need to establish an alternative framework for collective security that is based on their fundamental interests and peculiar circumstances, especially in the economic and political realms. A common security architecture in the economic realm is most likely to lead the overall search for a comprehensive common security model.

The Southeast Asia countries must continue to promote the confidence and trust in each other through multiple approaches in order to develop a comprehensive approach to the security challenges they would face. As their economies continue to grow from strength to strength, the interdependence will propel them towards closer security cooperation in all realms. Within the framework of comprehensive security, the military aspect is expected to continue to play a supporting role in the short term.

In so far as the Southeast Asian countries are able to coordinate their common military security in the (far off) future, it will most likely be more similar to NATO's roles as enshrined in Article IV rather than Article V. NATO's Article IV calls for the member countries to manage and prevent crisis that affects member countries. This is the most likely scenario for the Southeast Asian countries given their differences in defense priorities and commonality in desire to prevent spillovers of someone's domestic crisis onto another's borders. Until and unless a significant military threat appears in the region, the Southeast Asian countries are unlikely to move anywhere towards anything akin to NATO's roles as enshrined in Article V, which calls for the armed collective defense of member countries.

However, both the European and Southeast Asian countries do share a similarity in that the common economic security is fundamental to any larger common security.

The ongoing debate about the future of NATO's roles after the end of the Cold War highlights such a necessity. The European countries are discovering that the common economic security in the form of the European Union (which includes currency union in the future) by itself is a most critical way to build confidence and prevent military conflicts. However, any closer military union in the form of strengthening the role of the Western European Union (WEU) is more problematic as countries have to decide if they are willing to give up such flexibility of actions – very much part of a defining characteristic of the nation state. Likewise, it is also completely feasible that the Southeast Asian countries may find it adequate (in the absence of a substantial region threat) to only seek a common security regime in the economic sphere, while leaving the search for a common military security regime to the indefinite future until the situation warrants.

Further Research Questions

The related research questions that could be further studied include:

1. How would the concept of non-offensive defense (NOD) help to promote closer military cooperation between the Southeast Asian countries?
2. How would the United States, China, or Japan respond to the emerging collective security regime in Southeast Asia and what approach should they undertake to promote their own interests?

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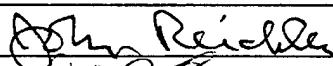
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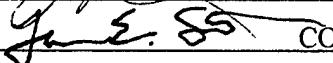
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